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THE

WOMEN OF ISRAEL.

BY

GRACE AGUILAR,

AUTHOR OF "WOMAN'S FRIENDSHIP," "MOTHER'S RECOMPENSE" "VALE OF CEDARS," ETC.

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THE WOMEN OF ISRAEL

FOURTH PERIOD.

CHAPTER I.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MONARCHY.—PATRIOTISM OF THE WOMEN OF ISRAEL.—MICHAL.

We are now come to an important change in the history of Israel; the first step to her downfall, and the first opening for the fearful flood of misery and crime which nationally and individually deluged Judea. We allude to the election of an earthly king, and the establishment of a temporal monarchy. In vain the prophet Samuel reasoned and implored, beseeching them to rest contented with the government already established; and in the deepest humility of spirit prayed unto the Lord. "Hearken unto the voice of the people, in all that they say unto thee," was the gracious answer, "for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected ME, that *I* should not reign over them." Awful words, and most awfully fulfilled! The infinite mercy of Israel's God would not reject His people, though they had rejected Him; but in the very gratification of their desire to have a king they received their chastisement; a chastisement not of a year's or a century's continuance, but lasting through ages and ages of crime, misery, expulsion, persecution, and working against unhappy Israel even at this present day.

But the Eternal would not expose them to these terrible effects of their own choice without warning, and by the mouth of Samuel He told them of all the evils they would experience under earthly kings, and that they would cry out in their distress unto the Lord, and then He would not hear them; but still they persisted in the very face of that prophetical word. God granted indeed their request. The people, with the wildest

rejoicings, received a king, and beheld a monarchy established; but the awful effects thence ensuing ought to convince us, that the granting our requests is not always the evidence of the Lord's love and approbation. Better, far better, to rest in Him, and submit to His will, however it may interfere with our own short-sighted wishes, than persist in their accomplishment, and so weary our Father in heaven with repinings and complaints, as to make Him grant that in anger, which in love He would refuse. We should, indeed, bring before Him all our wishes, through the blessed medium of prayer; but such prayers should ever be coupled with the entreaty for grace to meet his will, whatever it may be; to submit unmurmuringly to His decision; and still to realize His love, however He may ordain disappointment. To such prayers we are assured, through the promises of His Word, that he will deign to reply; but for the mere entreaty for the gratification of earthly wishes, the proneness to complain and repine at the faintest semblance of denial, oh! let us remember the misery hurled upon Israel by the granting their request for a king, and take warning. It is thus that, even in our history, the Word of God may instruct and guide us, and give us lessons for daily life and individual petitions from national examples.

The monarchy of Israel lasted for the period of four hundred and fifty years, and thus presents us with a fourth division of our subject; the social and domestic condition of the Women of Israel during its continuance being a remarkable proof for or against our argument, that no law transmitted to us by Moses commanded our degradation. By a careful study of their positions, as displayed in the various sketches of female character found in the historic books, we shall be able at least to discover if indeed there were any human laws or customs at work counteracting the elevating and spiritualizing influence of the statutes for woman's benefit enjoined by Moses. The fearful crimes, and awful state of anarchy and rebellion, during the kingdom, will not indeed allow us either the variety or the completeness of female characters, as displayed in our first and third periods; nor shall we find such beautiful lessons guiding us individually; still, in the brief sketches brought before us, there is sufficient for our conviction that, as women of Israel, we are as elevated and spiritualized as the most exacting nations can require; and that *if* we *are* degraded, socially and individually, in the mind of

any man, bearing the honored name of Jew, it is in direct contradiction to the laws of God, and completely opposed to the practice of Judaism, even in that period when her followers were sunk to the lowest ebb of misery and sin.

The establishment of the kingdom had in all probability less influence on the social position of the Hebrew women than on any other class, until the universal wickedness spread even to them, and caused the prophetical denunciations against their sins, as distinct from those of man. The first mention of women in this period, is their coming forth from all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, after the destruction of Goliath by David, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music; evidently a voluntary act, and marking their social position to have been one of perfect freedom, and also of some influence, else their ascribing to David the glory of slaying his ten thousands, and Saul only his thousands, would not have caused the king so much disturbance. We learn too, from this account, that the gifts of song and the dance, and playing upon divers instruments, had not at all degenerated in the Israelitish women since the time of Miriam, when they echoed back Moses's song of praise. The skill in these accomplishments argues an education both polished and refined, very superior to the instruction accorded to the women of contemporary nations. Examples of intellect and judgment we have had already, and shall have again; therefore it is also clear that their education was not confined to mere superficial accomplishment, which is often supposed the only instruction necessary for woman. The song, and dance, and knowledge of musical instruments, were but a small portion of the female Hebrew's acquirements; but that they are expressly named more than once in the Word of God, should encourage us alike in their cultivation and in their *enjoyment*, granted as sources of recreation, of innocent pleasure, and yet more as the means of sacred rejoicing. To abuse them, by making them sources of envy and display, and all kinds of ill-feeling, or to undervalue and despise them as snares and foolishness, must both alike be wrong, and prevent the perfection of the heart towards God. He endowed us not with talents to lie unused, but to make others happy, and to increase our own innocent and healthful resources, and create an ever-gushing spring of gratitude towards Him.

Nor did the women of Israel refrain from *national rejoicing*.

They were not confined to their own narrow spheres, feeling no interest beyond. They did not smile to scorn the holy feeling of patriotism, which should awaken every female heart to the joys and griefs, triumphs and defeats of her country, as if they were her own. They encouraged, they rejoiced in it; and its very possession and display proves their equality with man as citizens of Israel, and children of the Lord. We never find patriotism in a degraded position—the slave knows not even its name, much less the glow, the enthusiasm with which it lights up our being. It is in itself a refining and spiritual principle, intimately connected with our higher selves. To the Israelites it must have been yet more powerful than to any other nation, for their beautiful land was the direct gift of God; and bearing every sabbatical year miraculous witness of His unceasing love, in permitting the sainted earth to give forth of itself sufficient for the holy people, that they might not have the temptation of *necessity* to disobey their law. Israel in captivity may not indeed be enabled to realize the same feeling of *amor patriæ* as Israel in Judea; yet let us not forget that we are exiles, and sometimes cast a longing look of lingering love to that land which is still ours, and which will once again, at the mandate of the Lord, spring up in renewed and renovated loveliness, to welcome home the weary wanderers "from the north, and from the south, and from the east, and from the west." Did we sometimes think of Judea as our own land, we should not regard our destined return to Jerusalem either with direct unbelief, or as a change from the creature comforts which we may be enjoying in our captivity, not at all to be desired. Daily is the prayer for the rebuilding of Jerusalem offered up; yet how very many are those who, while they would think the omission of that petition almost sin, yet so little enter into its spirit, as to shrink from even the thought of returning unto our own most holy land!

Nor does this feeling towards Jerusalem interfere with the emotions which we all ought to experience towards the lands of our adoption—"Seek the peace of the city (or land) whither I have caused you to be carried away captives," the Lord Himself proclaimed through His prophet Jeremiah, "and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." What injunction can be stronger or more solemn than these words, directing even our prayers, and thus at once reproving

the scoffers who scorn the idea of individual petitions benefiting a nation? That Israel is deeply susceptible of a love of country distinct from the love borne towards Judea, is beautifully and forcibly exemplified in the history of her expulsion from Spain, and of her secret existence there in the very midst of danger, and death if discovered, when so many other lands offered a secure retreat. And shall not we, respected and at peace as we are, in free and happy England, encourage this refined and holy feeling, and "pray unto the Lord for it," as for our own bright land? By woman, even more than man, should this emotion be experienced—for how heavy would be her burden, if the peace of home were liable to be disturbed. Let us then remember our privileges and duties as women of Israel, and bid our own hearts to glow with patriotism, alike in mourning fondness for Judea, as in grateful and prayerful affection for the lands blessing the exile with liberty and rest; that we may unconsciously imbue the hearts of our sons with the same elevating and purifying emotions, and behold them, while glorying in the sacred name they bear, as heritors and future denizens of the land of promise, ever ready to stand forward as able citizens and valiant defenders of their adopted homes.

In confirmation of our theory, that in the earlier history of Israel one wife was the natural and legal position of woman, we find that Saul had no more—or more than the one would have been specified, as in the case of the other kings. He had two daughters, Merab and Michal. Of the former, little is mentioned; except that she it was, who was the first offered to David as an incitement to fight for Saul; who, already envious and malignant, thought to slay the valiant youth by the hands of the Philistines, and thus save himself all shame. But the Lord was with David, and had departed from Saul; and the young man must evidently have won the promised reward, for we read in Holy Writ, "It came to pass at the time when Merab should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife;" a course of acting exactly such as we should expect from the capricious tyrant which Saul had become. Still David, with a single-mindedness and simple confidence only found in early youth, and in a youth of virtue, seems to have trusted and fought again; and this time, evidently with so much settled foresight and determination, that we might almost infer that the love which Michal, Saul's second daughter,

bore towards David was fully returned, and so inspired the dangerous expedition on which he ventured.

We have not very much of Michal, nor any particularly pleasing portraiture of character, yet our history will not be complete without noticing all that is recorded concerning her. The deep love that in her youth she appears to have borne David, must have exposed her many times to an intensity of suffering which throws a degree of interest around her, and enlists us more warmly in her favor than we could otherwise have been. Jonathan's faithful friendship for David always receives the meed of our admiration, the more so from his being the son of his deadliest foe. The love borne towards him by the daughter of Saul, must have been a yet stronger emotion; and in consequence subjected Michal to still deeper suffering. It does not appear that Merab loved David; and therefore Michal's first suffering must have been excited by beholding him destined for another who loved him not; while she who had given him the first freshness and fervor of her affections was set aside and disregarded. Even when this sorrow was removed by the union of Merab with Adriel, and her love being reported to her father it pleased him as the means of ensnaring David, how little confidence could she have placed in her father's promise, when she remembered how he had already deceived! Her fears of Saul's caprice were, however, at this time without foundation. She became the wife of David, whom, we are told, she continued to love as fondly after marriage as before. In her case it was not "because the current of true love never will run smooth" that she loved him, and consequently that, when the desired happiness was obtained, its glow dissolved. Peace indeed, and rest from anxiety, she had not, even when the wife of David. The love she bore him must continually have exposed her to terror for his safety, for her father "grew yet the more afraid of David," and repeatedly gave orders that he should be slain; fortunately, he had taken his son Jonathan into his confidence, and the young man boldly and firmly stood forward in his friend's defence, venturing even to call the king's desired deed a sin against David, who had ever done his duty alike to Saul and to his country. For a time his pleadings succeeded, and as David was again with Saul, as in times past, Michal's terror might have in a degree subsided, and the heart alike of the daughter and the wife been a brief while at peace. But, again, there was

war with the Philistines: and David, true to his heroic character, went out and fought with them, and slew them with such great slaughter that they fled from him: yet how might Michal rejoice in the glorious heroism of her husband, when his deeds of valor ever recalled the king's deadly hatred, and exposed him to renewed peril? Even in the very act of charming, by his exquisite skill on the harp, the evil spirit from the monarch's heart, Saul flung the javelin which he had in his hand with such fierce and deadly aim, that David only escaped instant death by starting aside, and the instrument struck the wall. He fled from the royal presence to his own home, revealing by his sudden return the danger he had incurred, and recalling all Michal's fears. Nor was the danger over. Messengers sent to David's house to watch and slay him in the morning, at once roused the terror and the energy of his devoted wife. David was so universally beloved, that information of the king's intentions towards him had in all probability been transmitted to Michal by the messengers themselves, or through the agency of Jonathan, who, like his sister, was ever on the alert for David's preservation. In whatever way she received tidings of his danger, it is certain that she it was whose energy and judgment saved him; arousing him "to save thy life to-night, else to-morrow thou wilt be slain."

We find neither complaint nor bewailing on the part of Michal, though she was parting from her husband for an indefinite period, during which time suffering and horror of every description might assail both him and her; that she felt, even to anguish, we must believe, for we have been twice told that she "loved David." And those who love, can alone have an adequate idea of all that parting must have been; yet feeling itself succumbed before the energy of will, which only sought his preservation, scarcely allowing time even for words of kindness or one farewell embrace. "She let him down through a window, and he went, and fled, and escaped;" and Michal, not daring to give way to emotion, busied herself in carrying out her stratagem to obtain sufficient time for his escape, ere he was pursued. She laid an image in David's bed, and put a pillow of goat's hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth; and when the morning came, and Saul's messengers demanded David, she calmly told them he was sick; and with that information they evidently returned to their sovereign, probably not at all sorry that David

was unable to accompany them. The wrath of the king, however, was not to be turned aside; he commanded them—"Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him." And, again proceeding to his house, the deceit was discovered, and Michal herself brought before her father.

"Wherefore hast thou deceived me so," he demanded, "and sent away mine enemy that he has escaped?" And Michal answered Saul, "He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?" an answer which, though by the previous narrative not strictly true, was perhaps allowable from the dangerous and difficult position in which Michal was placed. To avow the share she had in his escape, would only have aggravated her father's anger; and though the enemy and persecutor of her innocent husband, yet Saul was still her father; and Michal, who had, no doubt, been brought up in the peculiarly strict and reverential feelings of Hebrew children to their parents, might not have felt justified in exciting her father's wrath towards herself, more than David's escape had already done. The answer appears to have satisfied Saul so far as his daughter was concerned; but the search and pursuit after David continued unabated.

During the immediate pressure of danger, the mind and heart are supported by their own energy; and we know not how fearfully the nerves have been overstrained till the period of *action* is past, and we can only *be still and endure.* How sadly this must have been the case with Michal we may well imagine, when we remember that, from the hour of his escape by her means until he was established in the sovereignty of Israel, an interval of five or six years, she never looked on the husband of her love again. Month after month, year after year, if she heard of him at all, it must have been still as a wanderer flying from place to place, at the imminent risk of his life, either from the emissaries of Saul, or from the treachery and spite of the various courts in which he was compelled to take a refuge. At one time even the inmate of caves and deserts—at another forced to feign madness—often in want of actual food and other necessaries of daily life; and yet more than these;—Michal was a woman, and a loving woman; and though the custom of marrying many wives was not illegal in Judea, and not felt as it would be now, we have already seen that it was productive of sometimes sorrow and vexation;

and to the absent and the loving Michal, the thought that David had found others to supply her place, and that therefore he could not need or think of her as she did of him, must have been fraught with no little degree of bitterness greatly aggravating the pang of separation.

Nor was this all. We are told (1 Sam. xxv. 4), "that Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti, the son of Laish," an act of capricious tyranny in direct disobedience to the laws of Israel. A divorce might permit a woman to become the wife of another man, but no divorce whatever had taken place between David and Michal; and consequently Saul's action must only have proceeded from that determined persecution of the Lord's Anointed, which urged him to annoy him in every possible way, even if to do so occasioned disobedience to the law. That Michal herself could ever have voluntarily acquiesced, when we know how "she loved David," is neither possible nor probable. Saul had become a tyrant even to his own family; and the same man who could cast a javelin at his noble son Jonathan, with the hope to slay him, after heaping on him all manner of abuse, only because of his love for, and defence of David, would not scruple to outrage every feeling of his daughter, and compel her, by the most iniquitous force, to annul her brief period of connexion with David, and become the wife of another.

That Michal was the unhappy *sufferer*, not the *agent* in these nefarious and most illegal proceedings, is clearly evident from two circumstances. In the first place, we are expressly told, "that *Saul* gave Michal his daughter," &c. Her name, as agent, is not mentioned, whence we infer that it was her father's tyranny, against which a weak and defenceless woman had no power to rebel. In the second, it is clearly demonstrable that she herself was blameless, else would not David have made her restoration to himself one of the very first proceedings of his regal power. Had there been even the semblance of a divorce, he could not have done this, the law expressly forbidding it; but the iniquitous tyranny of Saul, in this outrage to his child, completely justified David's after-proceedings. He would not visit on a blameless child the sins of a guilty father, by leaving her in a position to which parental tyranny had assigned her; but recalled her to his heart and to his home, at the very time when, had his noble spirit retained

any spark of enmity towards the house of Saul, he might, and with some appearance of justice, have permitted her to remain neglected and uncared for, in the equivocal station which, as no divorce had taken place between her and himself, she must unavoidably have occupied in Phalti's house.

The next mention we have of Michal after her restoration to David, is indicative of a feeling very contrary to that which at first attracted us towards her, and displays an imperfection of character which we might perhaps expect from the daughter of Saul, but certainly not from the wife of David.

For the last twenty years, the ark of God had remained in Kirjath Jearim, in the house of Abinadab, whose son, Eleazer, had been sanctified to keep it. Through all the troubles of the reign of Saul it had quietly remained there; no inclination having been demonstrated by either king or subjects to remove it, and so arguing an indifference to its sacred presence, only too fully borne out by the many illegal acts of Saul. David could not feel this indifference. The ark of God was to him so inexpressibly sacred, that his heart yearned for its holy influence in the city where he dwelt; and therefore every preparation was made for conducting it to Hebron with all befitting sanctity and honor. The fear, however, excited by the smiting of Uzzah for his irreverence, urged his turning it aside from the direct road to the city, and bringing it into the house of Obed-edom, the Gittite. There it abode three months; and the Lord so blessed Obed-edom, and all his household, that David again coveted its presence in his own city, believing with a child-like and loving faith that the presence of the Lord dwelt there, and would bless all those who sought to do him reverence and honor. "So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom, to the city of David, with gladness."

It was a very jubilee of rejoicing to the inmates of Hebron. Trumpets and holy songs marked its progress, and every six paces sacrifices of oxen and fatlings were offered to the Lord; and the king himself, disrobed of all regal ornaments, and attired simply in a linen ephod as one of the inferior priests, joined with his whole heart in the solemn rejoicing, by leaping and dancing before the Lord. The *mode* of this holy rejoicing may read strangely to our refined ears; but the song and the dance were ever the natural symbols of rejoicing in Israel. Amusements, which are by many deemed so profane as to be excluded

from all professors of religion, were, in Judea and by the chosen people of God, not only allowed, but sanctified and hallowed, by their intimate association with the service of the Lord.

"And as the ark came into the city of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window, and saw the king rejoicing, &c. And she *despised him* in her heart." Despised him! she who had once so loved him? How could contempt exist with love? Michal was a very woman; it was not the leaping and dancing she despised, but that King David should, without any semblance of royalty or state, clothed in the lowly garments of an inferior priest, mingle with the crowds, and become for the time as one of them. We know that such were her feelings by her scornful address to the king, when on the conclusion of the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings David returned to bless his household, and was met by Michal, eager to give vent to her contempt. "How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself (meaning removed the coverings of royalty) in the eyes of the lowest of his servants, even as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself," alluding to the lowest class of the people, who were often compelled to remove their long upper garment, lest it should hinder them in their work. "And David said unto Michal, It was before the Lord, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: and therefore will I rejoice before the Lord. And I will yet be more vile than thus, and be base in my own sight: and (yet more) of the maidservants of which thou hast spoken, shall I be had in honor;" a calm yet emphatic reproof, bringing forcibly before her the folly of her contempt. What were the trappings of state, the distinction of ranks, before the Eternal? In His sight king and serf, prince and peasant, were the same, judged only by the rendering of the heart towards Him, by their zeal or indifference in His service. It was the Lord who had made David what he was, and therefore what was he more in His sight than the lowest of his subjects? Nor did he rejoice merely from individual thanksgiving. It was the purest joy to a heart like David's, that to him the blessed privilege was granted of bringing the ark of the Lord into his city; a proof that the Eternal deigned to bless the city of David with His

immediate presence, and must in itself have created not only individual, but national rejoicing.

The allusion to his having been chosen in lieu of Michal's father, and all his house, cannot in any way be regarded as an unkind and uncalled-for reproach from David to his wife. The extent of the love he bore her, we infer not only from the fact of his recalling her, but from his making her restoration an absolute condition with Abner ere he would accept that warrior's allegiance. Abner was a person of the greatest consequence in Israel, alike from his near connexion with the family of Saul, his great influence with the people, and his skill and courage as a warrior. To obtain his subjection and allegiance was of almost vital importance to the popularity of David; yet did that monarch refuse to receive him, even at the risk of sacrificing his offered submission, unless he would bring him back his wife.

No feeling, therefore, actuated him towards Michal as Saul's daughter. Nor would a syllable of reproach have escaped his lips concerning her parentage, had he not been roused to just indignation, by her reproaching him with his zeal in the service of his God. Nothing is more painful, or more difficult to be borne with patience, than a contemptuous attack on our zeal in devotion, or on our ardent wish to serve the Lord, either in glorifying him, or doing good to our fellow-creatures; and the nearer and dearer the person who utters such reproach, the more exquisitely painful is it to bear. Michal does not appear to have been a religious woman. In no part of her history can we trace the workings of that secret, yet ever-acting piety, which characterized so many of her countrywomen. Her very love for David would seem to have been excited, not so much from his beautiful and unwavering piety, but from the dazzling beauty and chivalric qualities which had so distinguished him. Had she been religious, her joy and thanksgiving that the ark of her God was permitted to abide in her husband's city would have occupied her mind, to the exclusion of every petty and contemptuous feeling. Had she loved David for those spiritual qualities which had so gained him the loving favor of the Lord, delight and admiration that to him this privilege was accorded, must utterly have prevented all thought and emotion but veneration and rejoicing; but that it was merely exterior beauty and brilliant qualities which had attracted her, is clearly

evident from the scornful contempt with which she regarded him, when these were laid aside for the moment, and naught could find entrance into the heart of David, but rejoicing, thankfulness, and holy zeal.

David was satisfied with administering a just reproof; but the Lord was not: and from the punishment which befel Michal, we must infer that her sin was greater than at a first perusal it may seem. That it was not contempt of *David* only which she felt, but contempt of the holy service in which he was engaged; and therefore was it "that Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death;" not only debarred from having children of her own, but even deprived by a subsequent act of the Eternal's justice of the five she had acquired by adoption. In 2 Sam. xxi., we find mention of a famine in Israel, which was to arouse David to the fact that all the awful actions of Saul and his bloody house were not yet atoned, and reparation to the Gibeonites still to be made. Seven of Saul's nearest descendants they demanded should be delivered up to them, in lieu of either gold or silver, or even execution on the part of Israel's king. David, guided by the Lord, delivered up in consequence two of Saul's remaining sons, and his five grandsons, which Merab his eldest daughter had borne to her husband Adriel, and whom Holy Writ informs us, "Michal had brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite."

Thus was she doubly childless, and by a bereavement most awful in its kind; yet the very choice of these might not only be for justice done to the Gibeonites, but to work out still more fully the Eternal's anger against Michal. The same spirit which had incited her to scorn His holy service, might have prompted the very adoption of these children in proud defiance to his almighty will. Children of her own she might be restrained from having, but who or what was to prevent her adopting the children of her sister, and making them in every respect her own? If such were in truth her incitement to their adoption (and we only suppose it from an impartial consideration of her character), how fearfully must she have been taught the sinful and miserable vanity of striving with the Lord! How much better it would have been to have humbled herself in penitence and prayer before Him, acknowledging the justice of His first sentence of childishness, and endeavoring so to reform her heart and life, as not only to become more worthy of her husband's

love, but to regain the loving mercy of the Lord; not by a change in His decree, for that was immutable as Himself, but by the spiritual calm and blessedness which He grants to all who love Him. Had she done so, she might have been happier, notwithstanding her having no child, than she had ever been before; but of such conduct we have no trace. She looked only to human means for the acquirement of happiness, and those proved indeed "the reed wheron if a man lean, it will go into his hand and pierce it."

The mention of her having brought up the sons of Adriel, is the last notice which we have of Michal. Her character is not one to linger on with either pleasure or admiration, and therefore we cannot regret that we have reached its close. The only pleasing trait about her is her love for David; and that he truly loved her, endows her with an interest scarcely her own. Nor can we find any part of either her history or character to hold up as an example. A warning indeed it presents us, and one which, alas! but too many of us need. How often does silent and unavowed, yet still *realized* contempt, fill the human heart, when we witness an outpouring of zeal, to which our own cold unexcitable natures never can attain! How frequently do we condemn enthusiasm as romantic folly, only because to us it is incomprehensible; and, an evil still worse, how often do we secretly scorn the religion of those whose outward forms may appear to us childish, or unfounded, and not needed to bring up our prayers before the Lord! How many times do we contemn those who in the merest trifle differ from that standard of holiness which we may have set up for ourselves, and refuse to believe in their sincerity, because its semblance is unlike our own. And in scorn and disdain towards those who serve the Lord with those forms which their conscience approves and dictates,—oh! let us beware, lest contempt extend to the *service* as well as to the *servers*—to the religion as well as to the forms. This was the sin of Michal. For this the Lord Himself chastised her; and that she *was* chastised, is an unerring proof to us how deeply displeasing in the sight of the Eternal is contempt for holy things. Let us then look with more charity on the mere outward forms of our brethren, however they may differ from our own preconceived opinions. Let us not condemn their zeal, or be too hasty in pronouncing enthusiasm the service of the lip and not of the heart. If we look

well within ourselves to know what may be lurking there, what may need rooting out (even if to do so painfully severs the habits and prejudices of years), to discover if our own hearts and spirits be perfect with our God, we shall have little time for contempt towards the religious observances of others, and be thus effectually shielded from following in the mistaken steps of Michal, and like her incurring the wrath and chastisement of the Lord.

CHAPTER II.

ABIGAIL.

BEFORE commencing our next biographical sketch, we would call our readers' attention to one verse contained in the history we have just completed, as it so strikingly confirms our often-repeated assertion, that in the religion of God the women of Israel were privileged to join in all religious ceremonies, and to receive the blessings of king or priest equally with the men.

We have already noticed the procession of the Ark into Hebron, the sacrifices and shoutings and soundings of the trumpets; and that when they had brought in the Ark of the Lord, and set it in its place in the midst of the Tabernacle that David had pitched for it—and David had sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord—as soon as he had made an end of the offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of Hosts. And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the WOMEN as the men, "to every one a cake of bread, a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine; so all the people departed, every one to his house."

In most public rejoicings, it is generally thought sufficient to provide for *families* not for individuals. In Israel, we find every one sent away, with the means of not only feasting for the day, but for some days afterwards. And by the particular mention

of women as well as men, we see that they were not only *witnesses* of the sacred procession and of the sacrifices, but were singled out by the king as receivers, alike of his blessing and his bounty. This is but a trifling circumstance in itself; yet every verse in the Word of God tending to make manifest the equality of the Hebrew females, their peculiar and glorious privileges as women of Israel, is of no small importance. According even to the ultra orthodox, the law and its traditionary explanation must have been in force, both in theory and practice, during the monarchy of Israel; and if we can find no evidence there of the slavery and ignorance of woman, it is clear that the laws which are said to command these things have no foundation in Judaism.

We now come to a character which proves the dignity and elevation of the Israelitish woman most completely. There was a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel; and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats. His name was Nabal, of the house of Caleb, churlish in his disposition, and evil in his doings. He had a wife named Abigail, of whom we are expressly told by the Sacred Historian, that "she was a woman of good understanding and of a beautiful countenance." How such a superior person could ever have become the wife of the churlish Nabal, we might be at a loss to discover, did we not feel with a quaint old chronicler, that love of wealth was as likely to be found in ancient Israel as in other nations, and that Nabal's wealth had in consequence been a greater attraction in the eyes of Abigail's father than the domestic happiness of his child, which happiness an evil temper must inevitably have destroyed; the beauty and the very gifts of Abigail were likely to have won Nabal's love; for affection and even kindness may be found in churlish dispositions, though neither can be pleasantly demonstrated. Perfect freedom and equality Abigail evidently enjoyed in her husband's house; but the want of companionship for her superior understanding, the constant annoyances which Nabal's temper must have occasioned her, even if not shown to herself, displayed broadly in her household and to all who sought favors or even common courtesy at his hand, must have painfully embittered her domestic life. Still we do not find that either her energy or happy temper sank under it, as would have been the case with any but a very superior mind. Nothing is

so infectious as an evil temper. The strongest control, the most enduring and everacting piety, the most determined resolution to bear and forbear, to love and to forgive, however often pained or annoyed; all these must be experienced and practised by a wife, if the evil temper of her husband really fails to sour hers. Some meek gentle dispositions and unwavering sweetness of temper, may indeed stand the torrent of churlishness uninjured; but in these, though the temper does not fail, health and energy both succumb, and the most lasting misery is the consequence. Abigail evidently did not belong to this latter class, or she could not have acted in an emergency of terror as we find she did.

The confusion and misery reigning in Judea, from the Lord's rejection of Saul until his death, do not appear to have penetrated as far as Carmel, so as to interfere with the usual rural employments of the Israelites. Rumors of the contest between Saul and David, of the cruelties of the former and troubles of the latter, had no doubt spread far and near, and had enlisted the popular feelings in favor of the noble and persecuted David. It was sheep-shearing time, and all Nabal's flocks were gathered together; while feasting and merry-making diversified the pleasant labor in the household, and displayed the plenteousness of Nabal's stores. Feeling his safety still less secure since the recent death of Samuel, David, with his men, had retreated into the wilderness of Paran, in the vicinity of Carmel, where Nabal's flocks were fed. Scorning to appropriate to himself the smallest portion of the wealth of another, however sorely pressed by hunger and privation, David waited till the sheep-shearing, a time when most men's hearts were open towards their poorer brethren, and sent messengers to Nabal, bidding them greet him in his (David's) name, and with a winning courtesy which spoke well for the gentle and lowly character of the Lord's anointed, ask the food and drink he so imperatively needed. "Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace unto all that thou hast. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there aught missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. Ask thy young men, and they will show thee. Wherefore let the young men find favor in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David."

Could any address have been more gentle and respectful, or more calculated to have found an equally conciliating reply? Instead of which, we find Nabal, true to his churlish character, peremptorily refusing, and scornfully demanding, "Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh, that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?"

He might easily have known, by an inquiry of his own young men, to whom David, as a warrant of his truth, had so unhesitatingly referred him; but to do so would have inferred a softening spirit; and their information, perhaps, might have compelled him to comply with David's request: therefore he listened only to the dictates of his own ill-temper, caring not for the consequences, or indeed thinking of anything but the peculiar pleasure it was to be disobliging and ungrateful; for from the after-words of David, it would seem that he had not only *restrained* his needy followers from taking any part of Nabal's property, but absolutely *protected* them from the bands of marauders which, from the fearful state of the kingdom, prowled about Judea.

The indignation of the young warrior was roused by this surly refusal, perhaps to somewhat too great an extent; but David, though so truly holy and pious, and perfect in his heart towards God, as to be spiritually favored by Him above all his fellows, is never portrayed in Holy Writ as anything but a mortal, with all the infirmities and feelings of humanity. He was roused not only by this ill return for his courtesy, but by the requital of evil for good; and in a moment of anger, he commanded all his young men to gird on their swords, and with a troop of four hundred equally indignant as himself, marched from the wilderness in the direction of Nabal's dwelling, resolved utterly to exterminate all that belonged to him; and no doubt he would have done so, had not his wrath been turned aside, and his better spirit recalled, by the energy and judgment of a beautiful and noble-minded woman.

The high opinion which the superior understanding and unwavering temper of Abigail had won her in the minds and hearts of her household, is clearly evident from all which followed her husband's speech. One of the young men to whom

David had referred as witnesses of his truth, hastened to his mistress, and informed her of all that had occurred. "Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them [a forcible description, in a few words, of the request and the reply]. But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything, as long as we were conversant with them in the fields: they were a wall unto us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a man of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him."

From these words, we are led to suppose that the young man who spoke had seen enough of David, when in the wilderness together, to feel well assured that such ungraciousness would be severely punished. To attempt to speak to his master he knew was impossible, for his words would either have been wholly disregarded, or not even allowed to be spoken. We see, too, that he was ready and willing to bear witness to David's truth, but his master was such a man of Belial, that he dared not speak to him; yet he was too faithful to allow such a danger to fall upon his churlish master unawares, and so sought his mistress, whose gentleness and wisdom were in all probability the real source of his fidelity, and of that of all his companions.

Abigail lost no time in either lamentations on their hovering danger, or in aspersions on her churlish husband. Her active and energetic character is clearly displayed in the promptness and judgment of her proceedings. She asked no advice, demanded no assistance, requiring only the willing help of her domestics, and acting on the impulse of the moment as judiciously and quietly, as if she had months to think and to prepare. No woman could have done this, unless her understanding was ever in exercise, her mind well trained, and her *principles* so regulated as ever to guide her *impulses* aright. It is only when the mind and principles are unregulated that impulses are dangerous, and peculiarly liable to mislead. The habit of *thinking* when life is smooth, prepares us for *acting* promptly on an emergency; and the impulse that we follow springs scarcely so much from the feelings of the moment, as from the

habit of steady thought to which we have long subjected our minds before.

Such must have been the character and habits of the wife of Nabal, for we read that she "made haste, and took two hundred loaves, two bottles of wine, five sheep ready dressed, five measures of parched corn, an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses. And she said to her servants, go on before me; and behold, I come after you. *But she told not* her husband Nabal." She knew it was useless so to do, for she might not hope for his permission, and all depended on speed and decision. His safety, her own, and that of her whole household, was at stake. It was no time for deference to one who would oppose, for the very sake of opposition, even if his life were the sacrifice of his foolishness; and so mounting her ass, she speedily followed her servants. She could not have gone very far, when David and his armed men, in alarming fulfilment of her servant's fears, "came down against her, and she met them." Dismounting from her ass, she hastened to pay him the reverential homage due to him, alike as the anointed of the Lord and the destined king of Israel; and kneeling at his feet, addressed him in a strain so fraught with the spirit of wisdom and piety, so truly deferential, without one spark of cringing servility, rising, as she proceeded, almost into prophecy, that we can but wonder and admire.

"Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be," she answered, wisely seeking to turn David's anger on herself, that by her speedy submission it might be averted; "yet let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine ears, and hear the words of thine handmaid. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and those that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. And now this blessing (or gift) which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it be even given unto the young men that follow my lord. I pray thee forgive the trespass of thine

handmaid; for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days. Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound up in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall He sling out as from the middle of a sling. And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that He hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself; but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid."

In not one word of this beautiful address do we find Abigail forgetting her own dignity, by that fulsome adulation with which a mind of a less elevated grade would have sought to disarm David's wrath. She does not say one word which grates upon the mind as flattery. All of greatness, of victory, of life which was to befall David, she attributes to the one only source, the ordainment and the blessing of the Lord; and that victory only obtained, because it was not his own, but the LORD'S battles which he fought. She speaks of his becoming king of Israel, of the Eternal accomplishing all that He had spoken concerning David as *things assured*, although at the very time she spoke, David was a persecuted exile, with not a place but the wild desert in which to lay his head; and all those who loved or showed him kindness, exposed to wrath and even massacre at the hand of Saul. What but faith, the unquestioning faith springing from the piety of the heart towards God, and the intimate knowledge of His ways, could have dictated these words? and could Abigail have attained these things, if in any part of the Mosaic law she was denied the privilege of praying to the Lord, and studying His words? No. If woman were refused the spiritual privileges granted to her brother man in the law of God, there would be no such character as Abigail.

Not only does she, with prudence and ready wit, deprecate the anger of David by taking the trespass against him on herself, and asking his forgiveness as if she it was who had offended, but she contrives to lessen the offence of Nabal by attributing it not to malice or determined enmity, but only to folly, which prevented

his being answerable for his own actions, and therefore not worthy of David's further regard.

There is something singularly noble in Abigail thus taking on herself the trespass, and so voluntarily offering herself to bear its penalty. It was woman in her noblest and purest character. The temper and other evil habits of Nabal must not only have prevented all affection towards him, but repeatedly exposed her to those petty yet incurable sufferings springing from the surliness and moroseness of a churlish husband; yet of these things she thinks nothing, only remembering that, as her husband, Nabal demanded every exertion and even sacrifice on her part, and these without a moment's hesitation she makes.

Had not her appeal struck David, even as it strikes us, it would not have so turned aside his purpose. Unselfishness and piety, uprightness and honor, he himself so richly possessed, that to such in another his heart was literally compelled to respond, and wrath banished before them. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me," he exclaims, with that true unquestioning piety which never knows chance, but attributes every event of daily life to the loving guidance of the Most High God; "and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand. For in very deed, as the Lord God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hasted and come to meet me, surely by the morning light there had not been one left to Nabal."

How must the noble heart of Abigail have rejoiced within her, that her energy of purpose and promptness of act had, under the blessing of God, been permitted to save so many innocent lives, and also checked David in the commission of a great sin! The whole of this scene is so vividly described in Holy Writ, that it is rather remarkable that it should never have been taken as the subject of a picture, by some of the many illustrators of Scripture. A rocky defile of Carmel winding round the side of a hill, down which the four hundred armed followers of David in their glittering armor might be scattered in and out the rocks, except the few which, close beside their leader and the kneeling Abigail, marked the foreground. The servants and led asses of the wife of Nabal gracefully grouped on the opposite side of the armed men, forming a beautiful contrast, by their peaceful habi-

liments and alarmed looks, to the fierce and eager countenances of the warriors. The extreme beauty of Abigail, the pleading look and posture of the suppliant, blending with the modest dignity of the woman; the superb countenance and form of the still youthful David, varying from indignation to softening admiration, all might form a combination not unworthy of first-rate talent in an artist, more especially when that artist may be found at this very day amid the ranks of Israel.

Courteously and kindly David accepted the proffered gifts of Abigail, bidding her "go up in peace to her house, for he had hearkened to her voice and accepted her person." Meaning that he had accepted her as the person who had committed the trespass, and so forgiven it. She need be under no further alarm on account of her husband.

Her business thus blessedly accomplished, Abigail loitered not on her way, and without further parley returned to her house, evidently not having been missed by her husband; who, while death was hovering over his head, was holding a great feast in his house like the feast of a king. "And his heart was merry within him," in all the imbecile and sinful mirth of drunkenness. What a contrast to the dignified and exalted character of Abigail! How inexpressibly trying to her mind must have been the degraded brutish habits of such a husband! How strong must have been her innate dignity, her self-possession and enduring temper, to have so acquired and preserved the respect and faithfulness of her household, whom the example of their master might have rendered rude and sottish as himself, and who, were woman lowered in Israel, could have had no restraint whatever.

Wisely, though no doubt with a sorrowful heart, she left Nabal undisturbed in his inebriety till the morning's light, although the news of the danger which he had so narrowly escaped would effectually have roused him from his idle mirth. When told, its effect seems extraordinary, "his heart died within him, and he became as stone;" only explained by the supposition of his utter want of manliness and trust, which prevented all belief in David's assurances, and occasioned such vivid horror of his vengeance as literally to cause the death he dreaded; for "ten days after, the Lord smote Nabal that he died." An awful chastisement for his churlish insult to the young warrior known throughout all Israel as the Anointed of the Eternal. He

had grudged the smallest particle of his immense stores to one who, with such winning courtesy, had asked it at his hand; and the Eternal's justice, by one stroke, deprived him of them all, and compelled him, naked and bare, to appear before His awful throne in judgment for his crimes. And those crimes came not under the denomination of great delinquencies; they were those petty sins of stingy selfishness and an aggravating disobliging temper, which (how often!) grow upon us unconsciously; and we scarcely know their influence till some awful stroke of judgment awakens us to what *we might have been*, and to *what we are*. His wife's narrative was this awakening stroke to Nabal. He had sunk too low, too enervatingly, in the fathomless abyss of selfish indulgence to rouse himself to a better course of life, so that deadly fear of vengeance took possession of him, and combined with a torturing recollection of an abused and wasted existence, rendered him as feelingless and senseless as the stone to which he is compared.

How completely the appeal of Abigail had awakened David to the sin which his immoderate anger prompted him to commit, we read by his pious and thankful exclamation, when he heard of Nabal's death, "Blessed be the Lord that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and *hath kept His servant from evil*, for the Lord hath returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head;" words not only illustrative of his rejoicing thankfulness of his own restraint from sin, but also of his firm belief that all the changes of the heart are of *God* not man, and that would we keep ourselves from evil we must pray to Him to do so; not imagine we can keep pure, *only* by efforts of our own.

It was now David's turn to plead, and to her who had so lately knelt to him as a supplicant. When the usual term of mourning for a husband was over, "he sent and communed with Abigail to become his wife." Her answer is strikingly illustrative of that beautiful humility of character which is so perfectly compatible with true dignity and modest self-esteem. "Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant, to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." When she was in the character of a *petitioner*, we find no such expressions; for in entreaty they would have been servile and degrading; but as the *petitioned*, they did but express the deep sense she entertained of her own individual unworthiness, as little suiting her to be the wife of

one whom the Lord God of Israel had so singled out above his fellows. In worldly state and earthly possessions, David could not compare with her former husband. Destined to the kingdom he was indeed; but as we have previously stated, there was no *human* semblance that such he would be, or any apparent end to the troubles, the privations, the wanderings to which he was still so mercilessly exposed. Yet he was the beloved, the chosen of the LORD; and in comparison with the holiness—the virtue which must have originally gained him these appellations in the hearts of his countrymen—Abigail might well have deemed herself unworthy. She became his wife, however, and though in doing so, she exchanged the wealth, the security, the luxuries of such an establishment as had been Nabal's, for an anxious and wandering life, continually exposed to danger from the enmity of Saul and his followers, and to captivity from the neighboring nations; yet still the love and sympathy of such a mind as David's, the rest from the wearying annoyances of a diseased temper, the indulgence of pious emotions and obedience to all the observances of religion without the sneering scorn of a churlish and uncongenial disposition, must indeed have marked the exchange as a blessed one, and rendered her after life as happy as it had previously been sad.

We have one more mention of Abigail, and in the very situation of suffering and peril to which, as we have said, she was, as the wife of David, continually exposed. About two years after his marriage, David took refuge in the kingdom of Gath, and besought and obtained from Achish, their king, the town of Ziklag, which, though situated in the territory of Simeon, had till then belonged to the Philistines. In that city, David and his companions, with their wives and children, composed a faithful little Hebrew colony, and the town formed a quiet residence for the females and children while their husbands were engaged in war. On the many valiant acts of David we must not linger. Two years after he had received the gift of Ziklag, the Philistines gathered together all their armies in Aphek, and the Israelites pitched by a fountain in Jezreel. David and his men were with the rere-ward of the army of Achish; but, distrusted by the princes and lords of the Philistines, because of their being Israelites, they were disbanded from the army; and in consequence returned to Ziklag. Only three days had elapsed since they had left it; but what a

change awaited their return! The city was a heap of smoking ruins, and their wives and their sons and their daughters, all had been carried off; the Amalekites had made an invasion in the south, and without tarrying to slay, had marked their path with fire, and carried off every woman and child. Few lengthy descriptions of grief have the force and beauty of the Scriptural relation, "Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they *had no more power to weep*." And David himself had not only to mourn the loss of his two wives, but was "greatly distressed, for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters." Stoning him, the Lord's anointed! How fearfully must grief have disordered the minds and hearts of his followers; and how painful the position of David. To feel distress was no weakness in Israel. Human nature is never described in the Bible as other than deeply susceptible of all human and gentle emotions. Religion in Israel was never intended to render the heart insensible to the sweet charities of life and all their subsequent afflictions. It was no sin to weep—no weakness to feel distressed—but as "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God," so too must we, when the deep waters of affliction flow over us; and like him we shall receive the guidance and encouragement we need. But even in this emergency, when every human feeling must have been striving within him, urging instant action, we find him in meekness and humility *inquiring of the Lord*. And to him God vouchsafed reply, and bade him pursue, "for thou shalt surely overtake them and without fail recover all."

To enter into the detail of this chivalrous expedition we have not space, as it relates more to David than to his wife, whose history we are recording. Our readers will find the whole far more emphatically told than could be by an uninspired pen, in the xxxth chapter of the First Book of Samuel. Suffice it here to state, "that David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away; and he rescued his two wives, and there was nothing lacking to him, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, nor anything that they had taken to them; David recovered all."

The whole of this stirring tale reminds us of those narratives of the middle ages, on which the youthful lovers of chivalry

delight to linger; why should they not then feel equal pleasure in the inspired story of their immediate ancestors? We have quite enough of Abigail's character and sentiments revealed, to give us all sufficient for a just conception of what not only her feelings but her conduct must have been, when she saw the city of her husband burnt and sacked, and herself and all her female companions, with their helpless children, carried off by their lawless foes—exposed to every horror which the mind could frame or the heart could dread. The wild attack; the hurried flight; the agony of those days of capture which could have no hopeful future, for David and his men were with Achish, and the time of their return to Ziklag so uncertain, that traces of the Amalekite spoilers might be lost ere their capture was ever known; and then the wild rekindling of hope at the sudden descent of David and his men; the awful strife lasting from even unto even; the glorious conquest; and the reunion of husbands and wives, children and fathers; are so completely all the elements of romance, that we need little of imagination to give it life and breath, or turn to the records of fiction for events to stir the very heart's blood with the recital of chivalric deeds.

But not to record it merely in its romantic bearings, have we brought this portion of Scripture forward. It is to remark how truly and beautifully both the grief and the exertions of David and his men demonstrate the extent of love, conjugal and parental, which reigned in the Hebrew households. It is a beautiful illustration of the spirit of those Mosaic laws, which, penetrating the very homes of the first-born of the Lord, guided and sanctified the conduct of husbands and wives, children and parents. Love was the watchword of Israel, alike in their relations to their Father in heaven, and to each other. That the law was severe in its justice, is no contradiction to this assertion. Its perfection of justice was far purer, deeper, more influencing Love, than the modern codes which are pronounced so much more merciful.

The social and domestic position of the wife of Nabal must have been as perfectly free, independent, and influencing, as that of any woman of the present day, be the laws which guide her what they may. We perceive the counsel and wisdom of their mistress, sought and followed by the servants of Nabal without the smallest regard to their master. Compare this liberty of

will and action, this exercise of judgment displayed in the history of Abigail, with the position and the characters of the Eastern females of the present day, under the laws of Mahomet, and then let truth pronounce which are the degraded? Again, we are expressly told, that Abigail was not merely a beautiful woman, but of *good understanding*, which her whole story proves; and yet more, every word of her address to David evinces an almost remarkable knowledge of the *ways* and the words of the Lord. She is even called by the Ancient Fathers a prophetess. "There were seven women of Israel," they say, "who were prophetesses—Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, *Abigail*, Huldah, and Esther." We know not on what authority our venerable sages have honored by the term prophetess, those whom the Bible does not so distinguish; but it is a forcible proof of the deep learning and profound knowledge of the Word of God which must have been possessed by Abigail, and which she could not have acquired without study. The study of religion, then, was evidently *not* prohibited to the women of Israel; and therefore we know not by what authority such blessed study can be denied to us now.

Nor is it only religious knowledge which Abigail's character developes. It is a perfect acquaintance with *human nature*, else she had not so soon turned aside the wrath of David. Judgment, intellect, and talent all breathe in her eloquent appeal, and evince an elevation of intelligence impossible to be obtained were the social position of woman confined to household work. The more we study the story of Abigail, the more deeply we must feel how valuable it is to us as women of Israel; how impressively it marks out our privileges in every relation of life, and how unanswerably it proves that Jewish women need no other creed to give them either spiritual or temporal advantages.

As women, the character of Abigail equally concerns us. We have frequently insisted that the *narratives*, as well as the precepts, of the Bible are written for our guidance; and therefore are we so anxious to bring forward all that can aid our young sisters in making their Bibles their daily guide. Many would do so, but they know not how, from the sad scarcity of religious books amongst us, in modern tongues. The more we daily study the Bible, the more easy in truth shall we find it; but then we must not confine our readings to the five books of

Moses. One chapter every morning, one every night, and three on the Sabbath, complete the whole Bible—Pentateuch, Hagiography, and Prophets—all, with the sole exception of the Psalms, in the three hundred and sixty-five days forming the Nazarene year; and this formed into a habit, not done one year and laid aside, but persevered in for a life, would, in process of time, and without either labor or weariness, give the comfort and the knowledge that we seek. Nor need we fear that we shall grow weary of the task; each year it would become lighter and more blessed, each year we should discover something we knew not before, and in the valley of the shadow of death feel, to our heart's core, that the word of our God is in truth "the rod and the staff, they comfort me," of which the Monarch-Psalmist spake.

We have already noticed the little power which Nabal's churlish temper, and all the discomforts thence ensuing, had over the pious and energetic character of Abigail. From her wise forbearance towards him, both in acting without his knowledge in seeking David, and in not mentioning the effect of that interview till he was in a state to hear it, we can quite infer, that she not only bore with a churlish temper, but well knew how to manage it—a task not a little difficult, and which none but an unselfish and well controlled temper ever can attempt. Many women, instead of acting on such an emergency, would have lost all the proper time of action in vain lamentations, and in bitter reproaches of the churlish folly which had caused it; or, if they acted as Abigail did, many would have *displayed triumph*, would have vaunted of their own skill in turning wrath aside, and taunted Nabal with what might have befallen him. But Abigail, with true womanly dignity, did neither. That she had been permitted to save her household from an imminent danger was enough for her—and if the kind providence of the Eternal had not ordained it otherwise, she would have returned to all her usual quiet duties and silent endurance, never dreaming that her conduct had evinced anything worthy of reward.

Let us then, as woman, not only admire, but imitate the piety, the forbearance, and the energy of our gentle ancestress, assured that such virtues are acceptable to our God. Many and many a one have a Nabal in their households in one or other relation of life. Temper, thought of so little, encouraged because it is no palpable vice, so blinding the eyes of its pos-

sessor as to fling its black shadow on all his associates, till *they* are thought the churlish, *not* himself; temper, the severer of so many gentle ties, the rude breaker of so many loving hearts, the baleful spirit of so many otherwise richly favored homes,—oh, what but a character, a piety, an energy like Abigail's can enable us to sustain its trials, in a manner acceptable to the Lord, and not overwhelming to ourselves! As women, as women of Israel more especially, let us endeavor to cultivate these noble qualities, and feel that even for the sufferings of a churlish temper, we have sympathy, comfort, and guidance in the Bible. We may not all have either the beauty or the good understanding of Abigail; but we may all have piety and energy and influence if we so will, the one springs from the other; for the want of energy, the absence of all influence, arises from a listless indifference which never can exist with true piety. The service of God demands constant watchfulness, constant activity, aye, and constant thought; nor can we serve Him, apart from serving our fellow-creatures. To bear and forbear is peculiarly woman's duty—in every station of life, and more especially towards a husband; and every religious and justly feeling woman will rouse her every energy to conceal, or at least prevent, the evil consequences of temper and ill judgment spreading over her household, and lowering the character of a husband in the minds of his inferiors. Abigail's constant superiority of judgment and action we learn by her servants going to her without hesitation. They must have frequently confided in her judgment before, else they could not have demonstrated such implicit trust in a moment of danger.

Her influence we as clearly perceive in the success of her appeal to David; a quick judgment and few well chosen words saved herself and household from destruction, and David from the committal of a great sin. And if by the cultivation of *mind* and *manner* woman can achieve such things, who shall deny her the privilege of being an instrument of good, or seek to confine her to a false and degraded position, and so compel either vacuity and idleness, or frivolity and folly? We may not be called upon to exert our influence in a matter of life or death, but few are the women who pass through this life without some opportunity to use their natural influence for good, either in the encouragement of worth, or the wise and gentle guidance from the paths of sin. If there are some who will

deny this, who will assert that in their isolated position they have influence on none, and have no power to do good, we would say, it is because they *seek it not,* not because *they have it not;* and beseech them to rouse their dormant energy to find and use it, and by the superiority of their mental resources, their spiritual piety, their noble energy, and pure meek womanly influence, alike in their domestic and social position, make manifest to the nations how deeply they feel and glory in the privileges accorded to, and in the duties demanded from them, as the female children of the Lord.

CHAPTER III.

WISE WOMAN OF TEKOAH.—WOMAN OF ABEL.—RIZPAH.—JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON.—WIDOW OF ONE OF THE SONS OF THE PROPHETS.

THE period of our history which we are now regarding, will not supply us with such regular biographies as the preceding ones. Between Abigail and the Shunammite, in the time of Elisha, there is no female character which we can look upon as a whole, and derive thence individual benefit; but in the years of the monarchy stretching between the two above-mentioned, there are some notices of women peculiarly valuable to us in a national sense, as portraying our position, both social and intellectual.

The first of these is the wise woman of Tekoah, suborned by Joab to incline the king's heart towards Absalom. In what sense the epithet "a wise woman" was regarded, we cannot exactly determine; but from Joab sending at once to Tekoah, we are led to suppose her a person noted for her wisdom, and selected for that reason. Her story is, of course, a feigned one, and therefore does not command our commiseration; but it is valuable, as it so undeniably manifests how easy it was for the

women of Israel to obtain the ear of the monarch, and receive justice and protection at his hand, even against the opinions of the people. She tells David that she is a widow who had two sons, one of whom, in striving with the other, had smitten and slain him. That the whole family had risen against the widow, commanding her to deliver up the survivor, that they might revenge his brother's death by also slaying him; and so, in the beautiful language of Scripture, "quench my coal which is left, and not leave my husband neither name nor remainder upon the earth." David, in answer, desires her to return to her home in peace; that he would give charge concerning her. Still she lingers, and he reiterates, "Whosoever saith aught unto thee, bring him unto me, and he shall not touch thee any more. Then said she, I pray thee, let the king remember the Lord thy God, that thou wouldst not suffer the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy my son. And he said, As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the ground."

By this we are led to believe, that the supposed crime of the one brother against the other came under the accidental murders, where the slayer was permitted to seek the cities of refuge. It is, as we know, a fictitious tale of grief; still it is important to mark how exactly it tallies with obedience to the laws. The woman asserts herself to be a widow, and consequently the peculiar care of her brethren. Her position is sanctified, and therefore is it that David not only hears her, and promises that he will take her in charge, but pledges himself to yet greater leniency than the law allows. In his own case, one exactly similar, David had done such violence to his own parental feelings, that three years had elapsed since he had looked on his darling Absalom, towards whom we are expressly told *his soul longed to go forth.* The laws of his country might not be transgressed for him, though a sovereign; and yet for a mourning widow his kind heart yielded. This does not evince disregard to woman's feelings, or that they were less objects of care in the state than man, but rather the complete contrary; the *king's* son was to remain in exile and ignominy, the *widow's* son was to be protected and pardoned.

Not content with the favor granted the supposed widow, she proceeds to entreat the king. "Let thine handmaid speak, I pray thee, one word unto my lord the king. And the king said,

Say on." And then boldly and unhesitatingly the suppliant turns reprover; and, making her own case the king's, pronounces it a faulty judgment, else why does he not fetch home his banished? We need not transcribe the whole of her well judged appeal (see 2 Sam. xiv.). The king's penetration at once discovered the real mover of this scene, and addressing the woman as his equal, instead of demanding the truth from her as some might imagine due to his royal prerogative, he asks, "Hide not from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask thee. And the woman said, Let my lord the king now speak. And the king said, Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this?" The whole was consequently revealed; but no anger at the deception followed. The king's word had passed, and though it was to a supposed case, he would not withdraw it. The young man Absalom was recalled from his grandfather's court, and brought by Joab to Jerusalem; but still true to his paternal severity, David would not listen to his feelings; and for two years, though dwelling in the same town, the father and son never saw each other's face; whereas, had the widow's story been true, he would have permitted her the rich blessing of her son's continued presence and full pardon.

The incident is not an important one in itself; but by Joab's seeking a *woman* to bring the king to his wishes; by the little difficulty she had to obtain a hearing; by the kindness and feeling which dictated the monarch's manner and words towards her, we cannot entertain a doubt of the real position of women in Judea;—that she was thought of, felt for, and protected, infinitely more in the state of Israel, than in any contemporary or even in any more modern nation; that even warriors and courtiers disdained not to ask and use her aid; and that the king himself listened, not only when she was a supplicant on her own affairs, but when the strain was changed, and she ventured to address him on his own.

Nor is she the only "wise woman" whose instrumentality is mentioned in Holy Writ. Soon after the death of Absalom other confusions arose; and a quarrel took place between the men of Israel and the tribe of Judah, as to who should have the greater influence over the aged king, "and the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel;" in consequence of which, a man of Belial (the scriptural term for a seditious and rebellious spirit) named Sheba, a Benjamite,

blew a trumpet, and proclaimed, "We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel"—the usual war cry of the Jews. "So every man of Israel went up from David, and followed Sheba, the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king." A war of course ensued, seeming likely to be yet more injurious to Judea than even Absalom's rebellion. And Joab with a large army "went from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba." His appearance and proclamation, "He that is for David let him go after Joab," recalled the wavering Israelites, and Sheba was compelled to take refuge in the city of Abel of Beth-maachah. There Joab besieged him, casting up a bank against the city, and rearing battering engines against the wall, so that destruction and slaughter were inevitable; for no possibility or inclination for resistance appeared from within. Not one *man* had the necessary courage and wisdom to come forward, either to pacify Joab or to meet him in battle. A hesitation no doubt occasioned by the fear of Sheba, the natural reluctance to the delivering up of one who had taken refuge in their city, and the yet greater reluctance to rise against David. Between these conflicting emotions the downfall of the city was inevitable; but there was one within its walls, not only a wise, but a patriotic woman, who, boldly taking on herself all risk of personal danger, alike from the battering rams of Joab without and the rage of Sheba's adherents within, suddenly appeared upon the walls and called aloud, "Hear, hear; say, I pray thee, unto Joab, Come near hither, that I may speak with thee."

The noise of attack on the part of the besiegers involuntarily ceased, and soldiers and general must have gazed with some astonishment on the vision appearing thus boldly before them. And Joab approaching, she bade him "hear the words of thine handmaid. And he said, I do hear. Then she spake, saying, They were wont to speak in old time, saying, They shall surely ask counsel at Abel, and so they ended the matter;" rather obscure words, yet, as appears to us from the succeeding verse, meaning that, in former years, the councils held by the inhabitants of Abel ended all difficult matters; but that Joab coming upon them in determined hostility had prevented any amicable treaty, and had in consequence checked the interference of all such who, like herself, were "peaceable and faithful in Israel."

The address also appears to allude to, and in fact to illustrate,

the law contained in Deut. xx. 10—12. "When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it." Joab's impetuous zeal seems to have neglected this merciful ordinance, and therefore no council as in ancient times could be held in Abel, and no decision made, either for peace or war. And this was the more blamable on the part of Joab, because the city belonged to David; the inhabitants were his own subjects. The speaker feels this in her concluding words, "Thou seekest to destroy a city and mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the Lord."

All she says is so essentially feminine, so moderate and gentle, that it at once satisfies us that her boldness and wisdom in no way mark her a masculine character. She was still a mother in Israel; her endowments were evidently common to her sex and country, proving that they knew well how to unite the wisdom of the patriot with all the graces of the woman. Her very first words to Joab, "Hear the words of thine handmaid," mark her perfect consciousness of her own position, and pay that respect due alike to the rank and generalship of the person she addressed. An assumption of wisdom and consequently of authority, would have lost her the ear of Joab at once. A man may be *influenced* by woman, but not *dictated* to, however superior may be her wisdom. We cannot discover the wisdom of this mother in Israel in her actual *words*, so much as in her *actions*. The address was indeed well chosen, for it appealed directly to the best and holiest feelings of Joab, and could only have proceeded from a mind long accustomed to well regulated thought; but her sole plea was, that she was a "mother in Israel," a character and station to which the rudest and hardest natures never refused reverence.

"Far be it, far be it from me," was Joab's earnest answer, "to swallow up or destroy—the matter is not so, but a man of mount Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king, even against David. Deliver him only, and I will depart from the city. And the woman said, Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall. Then the

woman went unto all the people in her wisdom; and they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast it out to Joab; and he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city every man to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem and to the king." (2 Sam. xx.)

There will be no doubt some fair affectors of refinement, horror-stricken at the idea of a woman being influential in the execution of a criminal, and condemn the age in which such deeds were done, as something too barbarous to be regarded without a shudder. Now, there are few of our countrywomen, we think, more painfully affected by scenes and thoughts of blood than ourself; but it is the *necessity* for such fearful punishments we feel and mourn, more than the punishment itself. The Eternal ordained capital punishments for capital crimes; and if His infinite wisdom and His immeasurable mercy saw that it was good so to do, surely we poor weak finite creatures of a day, can have neither right nor wisdom to deem such acts of justice cruel, or loathe them as remnants of barbarity. Joab's demand was unanswerably just. The man whose seditious and rebellious spirit sought to light the flame of discord all over Judea, and dared to arm his countrymen against the Lord's Anointed, was deserving of death; and his own execution saved the lives of hundreds.

Was it not then an act of far greater mercy to demand the head of Sheba, than, by the weak shrinking from a duty so painfully repugnant to woman's nature, expose men, women, and children, in countless numbers, to the destroying sword? Yet, from the latter few would shrink as they do from the former, only because there is something so dreadful in the idea of a woman seeking the life of a fellow-creature. She sought, in fact, to *save life*, not to take it; and her efforts were successful. Enviable must have been that "wise woman's" feelings as the trumpet sounded, and the fierce warriors under the command of Joab struck their tents, withdrew their battering-rams, and in goodly array marched away from the pre-doomed city; leaving freedom and rejoicing gladness behind them, in a people saved alike from the destroying sword, and from the sin of strife and rebellion against the Lord's Anointed!

Now, it is not at all likely that these wise counsels were the impulse of the moment. The women of Israel must have had a voice even in the senate of their several cities. Their position

must have been alike elevated and intellectual. In a state like Israel, composed as it was of so many unruly members and constantly seditious spirits, wisdom could no more have obtained ascendency without cultivation *then*, than it can *now*. Had there been any law confining woman to any particular sphere, prohibiting her interference in any religious or secular matters, wisdom and judgment would not only have been *publicly* useless in a woman, but *privately* uncultivated, and we should find no such instances as the two we have recorded. A little attentive thought on the condition of the beleaguered city, the multitude of diverse opinions with which at such a time it must have been agitated, moved as it was by the presence and pleadings of the arch-rebel himself, the fierce troops without, the noise of the siege, and all its concomitant terrors; and remember, that out of these multitudes it was a woman who came forward, a *mother in Israel* (how sacred is the term!) who in her wisdom obtained not only the hearing of Joab, but, a more difficult matter, of the warring people, and bent them like a reed, only from the superiority of MIND,—must we not feel to our heart's core the real position of the women of Israel in the PAST? That she, even as man, enjoyed not alone the spiritual, but the intellectual and refining privileges of being one of the chosen of God; and must we not long for that FUTURE, when we shall again be blessed and influential in our own most holy land, doing the will of God, and being in very truth spiritually and temporally *helps meet* for His sons? Oh, shall not the thought of the past, and of the future, influence Israel's PRESENT, and waken her daughters to their immortal heritage, in being of the first-born children of the Lord; who holdeth them so inexpressibly dear, that the individual or nation who injureth them injureth the apple of HIS eye? Is not the thought that we are of a nation so beloved, sufficient incentive for the cultivation of spirituality, virtue, intellect, wisdom, affection, devotedness to God and man, all that could make the days of this life even "as the days of heaven on the earth?"

The devotion of Rizpah is another exquisitely beautiful trait of female character. Its mention does not contain a *lesson*, but a *picture*. It does not tell us what woman *should be*, but what *she is*, and is valuable as proving that the women of the Bible are but portraits of woman's nature now. The stern mandate of the Lord against the bloody house of Saul had not all been

fulfilled; and justice, that inscrutable justice which man dare not hope to explain, demanded the execution of the last remaining scions of the family of Saul. The narrative contained in the first nine verses of 2 Sam. xxi., is one on which it is better not to linger, lest it arouse doubts and questions verging on impiety. It is enough that it was the ordinance of the Eternal, and that He ever tempereth justice with mercy; and though to finite minds, in this instance, mercy may seem hidden in blood, it is enough for us to know, that "God's ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts," and calmly resting on this blessed truth, dismiss the subject as one to be explained hereafter, when the immortal likeness of God in which made He man, purified from the corrupting clay, will be permitted to trace the secret of His ways; and all that in His word seemed dark and terrible, bear witness to the perfect justice and the perfect mercy of Him, with whom "is the fountain of life, and in whose light we shall see light."

Day and night, from the beginning of the barley harvest, till the rain came down from heaven, a period of many weeks, did Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, keep solitary watch beside the mouldering bodies of the last remnants of the house of Saul. "She took sackcloth and spread it for her upon the rock, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest upon them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night." What a volume of woman's heart is told in that brief verse! That devotedness to the beloved dead which would guard the poor remnants of mortality from all insult of bird or beast—that lingering beside all which was spared her, alas, for that mournful "all!" Scorched by the sun of day, and chilled by the dews of night, yet moved she not from the stony rock, nor cared she for aught besides. Mourning, yet not repining; guarding the hallowed dead, yet breathing not her anguish, save through the tears that fell on the impenetrable rock, the sighs that mingled with the breeze. Who might feel for her, sole remnant of that bloody house? Who might lament those deaths which retribution called? None. And the mourner asked naught of man. Her world was by the dead, and there the mocking sun and the pitying moon gazed down upon her in her sad and solitary watch. And oh, is not this woman?—Is not this the love, the devotedness, which are the natural dwellers of woman's heart, when naught but nature speaks? And not entirely unsympathized

was her affliction. It reached the ear, and penetrated the heart, of the feeling and affectionate king, and the bones of Saul and Jonathan, and of them that were hanged, were gathered by David's express command, and buried with due honors in the sepulchre of Kish the father of Saul, which was in the country of his tribe; and thus that fearful ignominy, so revolting to an Israelite, the denying burial to the dead, was removed from the house of Saul by the devotion of a woman. Who, then, will assert that the purest and best feelings of our nature find no place in the Word of God? Who can seek to make religion trample on the most sacred feelings of humanity, by asserting that, if we truly love the Lord, we can never grieve nor be afflicted? How painfully mistaken are those who would thus instruct, and how sadly deceived those who would banish all *feeling* from woman's nature! Who would guide her by rule and measure? Who would check every enthusiastic impulse, every kind sentiment, every sympathizing emotion, every imaginative glow, all because it is so unfitted for this unromantic world; and therefore destines its possessor to more pain than pleasure? Oh, if we believe the Word of the Lord divine, let us come there, and we shall find guides for *feeling* as well as for action. There we find the emotions which God in His mercy gave, encouraged, not subdued; feeling, devotedness, affection, enthusiasm, all that can lift us up from the mere petty concerns and thoughts of a day, are there brought forward; and why then should the sweet emotions of the Israelite in the past, be deemed folly and romance, and so unworthy of the Israelite in the *present?* Oh! as women, women of Israel, let us cultivate every emotion which can refine and elevate and prepare us for that Future which has been so long our promised heritage! We are but strangers and sojourners in the land of our captivity; but our destiny is laid up with our God for that day when, in the face of the whole world, we shall be acknowledged as His own.

The next striking evidence of woman's social position in our present Period, is found in the far-famed, often-quoted judgment of Solomon. The wisdom of the monarch's sentence is the point generally insisted upon, to the exclusion of all the other topics of interest which this remarkable incident presents.

The term *harlot*, more than once applied to women in the Bible, had a very different meaning to that in which it is alone

used now. It is generally supposed to signify, indiscriminately, an innkeeper or hostess, as in the case of Rahab, or women in the servile classes, independent of servitude in households, but occupying some trades in Jerusalem peculiar to themselves. They had, in consequence, neither rank, wealth, nor any of the usual accessories to the royal favor. Yet we find that the very first persons who obtained access to Solomon, after the offerings with which he sanctified his entrance into Jerusalem, were two women of this class. It was not that there were no inferior courts of justice in the Mosaic Law, no order or division of ranks in the Jewish State. There were all these. Yet, if the women of Israel demanded the judgment of their monarch himself, the very lowest classes had access to him; and their cases were heard and judged. Certainly a very different mode of proceeding to the customs of other nations, either then or now.

Surrounded by his officers and court, in the magnificent array which marked all the proceedings of King Solomon, the monarch listened with patient and sympathizing attention to the tale of affliction boldly spoken before him. It was a sad and a strange one, and seemingly so difficult for a just decision on the part of the youthful judge, that interest was in no slight degree excited. Two women dwelt in the same house, to each of whom a child was born; the one within three days of the other. They were alone within the house, and the child of the one woman died, and she arose at midnight and changed the dead for the living; and when her companion awoke in the morning, to nurse her child, behold it was dead; but when she had looked on it attentively, it was not her child which she did bear. And when the complainant narrated this tale, her opponent denied that it was so, saying, "Nay, but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son! And this said, No, but the dead is thy son, and the living is my son; and thus they spake before the king." In a modern court of justice we think a similar case would be found somewhat difficult to solve. Solomon made no pause; repeating the charge and its denial, so as to make it clear to all who heard, he continued, "Bring me a sword," and when obeyed, pronounced that memorable sentence which first revealed his godlike wisdom to his subjects: —"Divide the living child in two, give half to the one, and half to the other. Then spake the woman whose the living child was, unto the king, for her bowels yearned unto her son:

Oh! my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it; but the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it. And the king answered and said, Give her [the first speaker] the living child, and in no wise slay it, she is the mother thereof!" And if all Israel, when they heard of this judgment, feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, how deeply, how gratefully, must the real mother have rejoiced in the courage which brought her before the monarch, and, through his sentence, received back her son!

Solomon's wisdom, in this instance, proceeded simply from a profound knowledge of human nature. He tested the truth or falsehood of the relation by an appeal to the heart, and decided according to its unguarded witness, demanding nothing more for his own satisfaction or that of his hearers. The incident is a trifling one; but it is valuable in demonstrating the social position of the women of Israel at the period. We have already seen that to obtain the monarch's ear was quite accessible to woman, in the narration of David and the widow of Tekoah; but the present instance is, if possible, still more convincing, from the fact of the women being of the lowest classes, and having no friendly influence to bring them forward; nothing in fact to plead in their favor, but their privileges as women of Israel, which of course gave them admission to their earthly sovereign, who was but the vice-regent of Him by whom all Israel, men, women, and children, were heard, judged, and answered: and when the law of the land permitted, nay, commanded, impartial judgment on all who claimed it, *women* as well as men, it surely cannot be accused of either degrading or enslaving; many an afflicted and oppressed one of the Gentile lands might be found to wish it were in action still.

And how beautifully does this simple narrative display the power of nature! It was far easier to resign her babe than see him die, even at the risk of her previous recital being disbelieved. She could feel nothing but the fatal command of the king to slay the child; little could she think those agonized words of entreaty were expressly called for by the king, for the discovery of the truth; and that the burst of natural feeling would be the means of giving her back her child. How forcibly does this little anecdote confirm our reiterated assertion, that the Word of our God guides and portrays *feeling* as well as action, and that all our purest, best, and noblest affections will always

find their reflection there. And this is one of the widest distinctions between the Bible and Profane History. The latter narrates *events*, actions, the palpable and striking parts of man, if we may so express it, but touches not that immaterial and subtle essence of thought and feeling, whence alone all that is palpable and striking comes. The Bible in a few brief words will give the key to actions, will simply portray a feeling, an impulse which flashes on the heart, awakening, as by electricity, the links of nature, which unite the present with the past in the history of humanity; and we know such record is divine, else the darkly hidden, rarely penetrated, mysteries of the human heart could not have been so forcibly revealed.

Nor are they the only illustrations of feeling. How touchingly illustrative of that affection is Elisha's first address to Elijah! When the latter threw his mantle upon him, as symbolical of his elevation to the prophetical calling, a rush of strange yet ecstatic feeling must have taken possession of him: perhaps the aspirings of many years, the heart's hopes and longings for such spiritual election, unknown to any but his own heart, were gratified. It must have been some extraordinary and incomprehensible impulse, actuating the resignation of all early employments and associations, simply to follow Elijah—feelings probably overwhelming in their suddenness; yet we find him in the midst of them thinking of his parents. "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee."

It is in truth only a feeling, not any momentous incident or striking illustration, which these simple words betray: but it is often from little things like these, that we may form an estimate of the social condition and feelings of a people. The Jewish law, as we have seen, peculiarly and affectingly touches on the conduct and even emotions of children for their parents, and parents for their children. Elisha, we may feel sure, both from his being the anointed prophet of the Lord, and from the whole course of his after-life, had been brought up strictly as an Israelite. He had, as is often the case, received an education which, in the very midst of idolatry and misery, preserved him undefiled and fitted to supply Elijah's place. His exclamation strongly proves how completely the *affections* were blended with spiritual gifts; while from his lingering yearning towards his parents, we feel what they must have been to him—his *mother*

as well as his father. There is no such thing as filial reverence and love in nations where woman is degraded. In the Jewish nation, on the contrary, we find repeated instances of both reverence and love—such could not fail to have been the case when "honor thy father and thy mother" was one of the first commands of God Himself.

We trace, too, much of a mother's nurture and influence in the peculiarly sweet and loving character of Elisha during his prophetical career. His mission was almost all of love; and the feeling and sympathy which he manifested to all who sought him, especially towards women, as we shall see in more than one instance, display a manly character formed by a *woman's* hand.

One of the first miracles performed by Elisha was for a woman, evincing the tender kindness of his disposition, and proving that woman was not considered unworthy to receive relief, through him, from the hand of her gracious God. She was a poor widow, whose only claim to the compassion of the prophet appeared to be, that he knew that her husband, "thy servant, did fear the Lord." But he died poor, and in debt, and, in exact illustration of the law, the creditor came to demand the service of his two sons, in lieu of the sum that was owing,—a hard trial for the poor woman, left in her bereavement with but two sons, from whom the justice of the law compelled her to part, unless she could raise money sufficient to discharge her debt; and so without fear she approached the prophet, and stated her case. "What shall I do for thee?" was the commiserating reply; "tell me what hast thou in thy house." And what a picture of uncomplaining poverty does her answer bring! "Thine handmaid hath nothing in the house but a pot of oil." The prophet felt for and relieved her; but how much of childlike and trusting faith must she have needed, in the obedience to his strange command,—"Borrow thee vessels of all thy neighbors, even empty vessels, borrow not a few. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee, and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full." Borrow vessels to fill with oil, when she had but one pot of oil in the house! How could this be? Was not the prophet playing with her distress? How could such a strange command avail her? Such questions would only have been natural; but

we do not find that they entered her mind, or prompted doubt and speculation. She might, perhaps, have heard of the widow of Zarephath, whose cruse of oil had miraculously lasted during the famine; but more probably her instant obedience originated in that simple guileless trust which should characterize every feeling of our heart towards God. "So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who had brought the vessels to her, and poured out. And it came to pass when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet another; and he said, There is not a vessel more; and the oil stayed. Then she came and told the man of God, and he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children, on the rest." It was not enough to give her *present* relief—the merciful kindness of the man of God provided also for the future, and gave her the blessed relief of retaining her children beside her. Now if woman were of no account in Israel, it would have been a greater kindness to take her sons from her, than leave them to her training. As a widow in Israel, she herself would have been provided for; there was no *need* for this great mercy to have been shown her: nor in her retired, simple mode of living, could the performance of the miracle for her have increased Elisha's prophetical reputation. She was a poor afflicted individual—of no more consequence amongst her countrymen, either in life or death, joy or sorrow, than were we to remove one grain of sand from the seashore. Yet she was as much an object of pitying mercy in the sight of her God and of His prophet, as the highest and most important in the land. And what was her sole plea for hearing and acceptance? "Thou knowest my husband, thy servant, did fear the Lord;"—meaning not only the departed, but herself and her whole household. There was no long list of high-sounding deeds, of sublime projects, and seemingly important services. The sons of the prophets, as they were called, appeared to have passed their quiet lives in holy meditation on the law and the works of God, and in serving Him by such deeds of unostentatious kindness and social benevolence as very often to die poor. They asked nothing but a bare sufficiency of board and lodging blessed with family love. They were never heard of out of their own retired sphere; but they feared the Lord, and taught their wives and children to do so likewise. And this was the poor widow's plea; and it was accepted.

And shall we then say the women of Israel have no access to God? Do we need more than our own blessed faith and its vivid illustrations in the Eternal's own word, to give us not only consolation but encouragement? Can we not all feel as that poor widow did—a guileless faith, which asked no question, but obeyed—which came at once to the man of God, and, though his words were strange, yet trusted and was relieved?

True, we have no man of God to whom to seek: we may not look to miracles for our relief; but we may all come to God's word, and, through it, to God Himself. There is no barrier between us and Him. Our holy faith gives us the blessed consolation of coming to Him direct, and of feeling that, if we do but seek to fear, and love, and serve Him, we shall be accepted and beloved. Lowliness of station, of intellect, of service, is of no account with Him. The poor widow is an evidence that the poorest and the humblest, the merest atom of His stupendous creation, is not unworthy of His regard, aye, even to the performance of a miracle in her behalf; and her sole plea was, she "feared the Lord." Oh, let not the false idea of too great unworthiness to approach Him, of incapacity to address Him in words fit for His acceptance, obtain a moment's resting in the female Jewish heart. We are His—His own—and every expression in His Holy Word proves that we are so, and that now, aye, even now, every woman who bears the glorious name of Israel, be she rich or poor—full of good deeds and pious thoughts, or bereft of all but a childlike faith and guileless love of God—still she has spiritual privileges; a closer, dearer, more blessed connexion with her Father in heaven, than is the lot of any woman. She cannot read her Bible without feeling this. Oh, let her *prove* it in the sight of the whole world!

CHAPTER IV.

THE SHUNAMMITE.

The poor widow so mercifully relieved and blessed, marks the social and spiritual condition of the humbler classes of Israel-

itish women. We are now about to consider a Jewish female in a much higher station.

In the town of Shunem dwelt one, designated in the Bible as a "great woman," meaning a woman of rank and consequence, to whose hospitable house the prophet Elisha ever turned when he passed through the town. It was not the custom of the prophets to enter the houses of the great and eat at their luxurious tables, preferring the humble meal and lowly roof as more accordant with their heavenly mission than the good things of earth. Not that they resembled the self-mortifying ascetics of some Gentile creeds, and imagined that their merit in the sight of God was weighed according to the extent of their self-inflicted penances; but simply, that the mind might be kept clearer, the spirit poorer, and the body healthier, by moderation in all things. Their mission of love, too, was to all classes, and the poor could not have come to them with such confidence, as in case of the widow, if their luxurious style of living placed them with the nobles of the land.

That to lodge and eat amid the wealthy was contrary to their usual habits, we learn from the forcible expression, "she *constrained* him to eat bread [bread in Hebrew comprising all sorts of food, of course signifies regular meals]. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread;" and in so doing, it is evident that he found the Shunammite, one of "the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal nor kissed him," and accepted her hospitality in the same spirit of piety and kindly love with which it was proffered.

Once he had been *constrained*, for the prophet might have feared that the wealth and luxury which marked the abode was impregnated with the same awful seeds of vice and impiety which desecrated the wealthy of the capital; but a second time he needed not constraint, for one interview sufficed to mark the spiritual elevation of his hosts, and that they were indeed those with whom a prophet of the Lord might enjoy the delights of social intercourse in innocence and peace.

Not content with proffering the mere hospitality of rest and food, we find the Shunammite saying to her husband, "Behold now, I know this is a holy man of God which passeth by us continually. Let us make him a little chamber, I pray thee, in the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to

us, that he shall turn in thither." And we know that her husband's acquiescence was instantly obtained, and her plan accomplished; for the very next verse we read, "And it fell on a day that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber and slept there."

Briefly as this is related, how beautifully it illustrates the character of woman—the eager desire to show kindness, and so to show it as best to harmonize with the feelings and habits of its object. The establishment was probably the highest and most influential in Shunem. The Shunammite was an independent mistress of her own household, possessed of power to ask whom, and to do what she willed; she is the prime mover in the whole narration; and she it is to whom the reward is given, as the one from whose pure mind and noble heart the hospitable kindness originally came.

That she did not at first know Elisha as a prophet, does but enhance the mild benevolence of her character. There was nothing in his appearance to mark superior rank or superior endowments; nothing probably but a gentle courtesy of manners which marked him worthy of kindness and attention. That they would ever be returned, she could not for a moment suppose, for the stranger was evidently a wanderer, with no settled home or calling. But true benevolence never thinks of further recompense than *the act* of showing kindness brings. It is wrong to suppose that benevolence is but synonymous with acts of charity to the poor and needy. It finds space for its encouragement in every social and domestic duty of life. Benevolence to equals appears almost a paradox; yet it is not: for were such more often proved, in the earnest search after one another's social happiness, in acts of daily kindness, and ever active fellow feeling, how much happier might this life be!

It was this rare and beautiful benevolence which the Shunammite so richly possessed, and which is still more forcibly displayed in building a chamber for the man of God, than in her first hospitality. A very few interviews probably convinced her that he was something beyond that which he appeared, and the prophet's own lips might have told the rest, or at least have imparted that his mission was of God. The bustle and varied scenes of a large establishment were no fit home for one who, when not employed in the service of his fellow-creatures, passed his time in meditation and prayer. Even a chamber to

himself within the house would not have permitted him the privacy he desired, besides causing him to diverge from the plan of moderation and retirement, demanded from him as a prophet and a reprover, by *act* as well as word, of the far-spreading vices of the time.

To remedy this, and silently tempt his sojourning a longer time with them than the mere acceptance of a meal, the Shunammite's ready mind conceived the idea of erecting a chamber expressly for him, with an egress and ingress of its own, and furnished with that kindly regard to all, which might make him look upon it as his own. Her plan was, of course, imparted to her husband, and how clearly does her simple expression, "Let *us make* a little chamber, I pray thee," evince the affectionate confidence only found when husband and wife are equals; even though, by a succeeding verse, we are led to suppose that her husband was very much older than herself.

The chamber was built and furnished; and greatly must Elisha have been surprised and affected by this proof of regard. We find him, in truth, making no remark; but how deeply he felt it, we learn by his desiring his servant the following morning to "call the Shunammite." Call her? Why, had she not been in the chamber to give him welcome, and bid him look on all around him as his own? No. Her truly refined and feminine nature shrank back from obtruding herself upon the prophet, and so compelling thanks and approbation. She wished him to *feel* the comfort of a retired and private home, but *not* that he owed her obligation: and so she kept aloof, demanding no more than her own heart gave, in the delightful thought that it was in her power to add to the comfort of a man of God.

And in this eager desire to reverence and serve the *prophet*, can we not read the love she bore to *God?* To mere earthly natures Elisha would have been nothing more than any other man —except perhaps exciting the emotions of dislike and dread with which those persons are ever regarded, whose lives and even characters are the reprovers of our own; but to those who truly and earnestly seek to love God, His ministers are especial objects of reverence and care; and such was the feeling of the Shunammite.

"Behold! thou hast been careful for us, with all this care," was the address of Gehazi, by his master's command; "what is to be done for thee? wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or

to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people."

And what a volume of feeling is contained in these brief words! Not only a perfect contentment with her lot, but a meek and sorrowful reproach, that they could think she had shown this care in the hope of reward. Nothing can be more painful to a delicately feeling mind, than the idea of receiving return for aught of kindness: the heart glowing with its own warmth, with the peculiar pleasure of serving another, shrinks chilled into itself, feeling how completely it is misunderstood; how little its pure motives can be appreciated. Some natures would have been indignant at the supposition that she could not do a kind deed without reward; but the character of the Shunammite permitted not the *expression* of the feeling. Her lip was closed, but her heart was full. Expostulation with Gehazi at the injustice of the motive attributed to her, or acceptance of the offer, were alike contrary to the retiring dignity of her character; and simply saying, "I dwell among mine own people," she retreated hastily, as desirous the conference should be closed; but Elisha was not satisfied. He himself, probably, did full justice to the pious motives which had actuated her; but he wished to make publicly manifest, that no action engaged in out of pure love of God and reverence to His ministers, should pass without reward; and on hearing from Gehazi that her husband was old and she had no child, he again summoned her, and this time into his immediate presence.

It was, no doubt, with some little repugnance she obeyed; fearing that her sensitive feelings might again be wounded by a proffer of service which she had so fully resolved not to accept. And "when he had called her, she stood at the door"—how impressively betraying her reluctance! She could not refuse to speak with her guest; but, with that mixture of humility and real dignity which the true-feeling woman knows so well how to blend, she waited his commands on the threshold of his apartment.

This time, however, no *offer* of reward chilled and saddened her. The prophet asked not, sought not, the expression of her wishes; but at once promised, "Thou shalt embrace a son"—a child, a son! Should she indeed possess that for which, as a woman of Israel in the olden time, she must so often have longed, though the wish was never uttered! and, in the fulness of

her sudden joy, the promise seemed too precious for belief, "Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid!" Still, even in that moment, we trace the same gentle self-possession which had characterized her answer to Gehazi. No burst of rapture, no triumph, as would have been had she looked to her hospitality to bring reward. No; while her whole heart must have so trembled with the suddenly awakened hope and joy, that steady thought was impossible, yet she spoke calmly, seeking to strengthen her faith in the promise, by the recollection it was in truth a "man of God who spoke," even while she besought him not to deceive her—the very entreaty proving how earnestly and how long she had yearned for such a blessing.

Doubt of the power of the Eternal to bring the promise to pass, it is evident, never assailed her. Her words to the prophet sprang merely from a too sudden thought of joy, and the anticipation was fulfilled; for at the proper season, exactly in accordance with Elisha's promise, she embraced a son.

Can we not picture the increase of domestic love and happiness which this infant treasure must have created in the Shunammite's happy household? All we read of her, marks her the very character to enjoy to the full the intense happiness of maternal love, in its highest and most spiritual sense—one whose years passed in *deeds* not words; who would enshrine deeply in her own heart those pure emotions and high feelings from which the simplest action sprang,—one whose best resources had ever been independent of all outward excitement, and who, "dwelling among her own people," had not a thought nor ambition beyond. Her home was the shrine which knew her best, and from which the mild light of kindness and benevolence emanated many roods around. To such a one, life, even when childless, could never have been sad; yet how many a lonely moment, a yearning thought unspoken, uncomplained of, yet still her own, must have been filled with the irrepressible gush of tenderness called forth by her child! How inexpressibly sweet must have been the holy task of leading that infant heart to God, and in the very midst of national sin and misery training him for heaven! Can we not fancy her strong affections concentrating their force and intensity around her boy, and lifting up her whole soul in increased adoration to her God?

Nine or ten years might have thus passed; and her love and care seemed blessed in the growth and improvements of her

child. He was now old enough to leave his mother's side, and sometimes accompany his father in his agricultural employments. We can imagine him, in his innocent glee, running from field to field, and eagerly sharing every rural occupation. A sudden stroke, either from the burning heat of the sun or some other cause, arrested his boyish joys, and, clinging to his father, he could only utter, "My head! my head!" Imagining it only a slight pain, which would soon pass, his father desired one of his men to carry him to his mother; "and when they had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon and died."

What a sudden and awful change! A few brief hours previous, the fond mother had parted with her darling in full health and glee, and he was brought back to her pale, suffering, powerless—only sufficiently sensible to cling to her neck and lay his burning head upon her bosom. And she sat still, calm—apparently unmoved—lest the faintest display of her uncontrollable agony should increase his suffering, or disturb him as he lay. That every aid possible to be obtained to alleviate the disease was sought, we cannot doubt; but the mother moved not, nor would she have her child removed, whilst life remained. And when we read this, shall we say the narratives of the Bible enter not into the emotions of the present day; that the characters there represented are of a nature utterly distinct from ours? What mother, more especially of an only child, can read the brief record of "they brought him to his mother, and he sat on her knees and died," without sympathy; and as she pictures the sad scene in her fancy, without feeling that human nature, alike in sorrow or joy, is in all ages the same; and that, therefore, the Bible records do indeed concern her, for they speak of characters in all their strength and weakness, faults and virtues, like her own?

No sound of wailing, no murmur of complaint, escaped the mother's lips, as the breath of life passed from that loved form; as those sweet eyes, still fixed on her, became dim and lustreless, and even the faint moan of infant suffering no longer met her ear. "She rose and went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out. And she called to her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men and one of the asses, that I may run to the

man of God and come again. And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day? it is neither new moon nor Sabbath. And she said, It shall be well."

Here, again, is woman brought before us in her highest and loveliest nature. A weak mind would have only *felt*, not acted; would have been so overwhelmed with agony, as to have been incapable of any thought but the affliction which had befallen her. Not so the Shunammite; sustained by that noble energy, that perfect self-control, which had characterized her whole life, this trial cannot disturb the beautiful harmony of her character. Even to her husband she is silent as to their heavy affliction, and she evades his question;—whilst there is hope,—aye, and to her faithful heart there is hope even now, though the child is dead—she will not afflict her husband. The full tide of grief is laid up in her own breast, aside from herself. Till she has *acted*, she has no time to sit down and weep, though her throat is dry and her breath impeded. We read the unutterable agony in her movements, not her words—"she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive on, and go forward, slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee." What was to her the heat, the fatigue of this unusual journey? She had but one thought, the man of God. He alone who had promised her "a child from the Lord," could have the power, by prayer, to restore him even from the dead. One recollection only mingles with the thought, Elijah and the widow of Zarephath. Had not her child been restored from the dead? and had not Elisha equal power with the gracious Lord? Without this thought, this *faith*, the mother must have sunk; for minds like hers ever prostrate the *frame*. Tears and complaints give relief: it is the heart which never breathes its grief that bows the body to the dust. And not alone the *power of Elisha* was uppermost in her mind; she must have known, have perfectly realized the attributes of Elisha's God, or the thought of the prophet would have been no comfort. She must have felt that God was love, had compassion and sympathy even for *her individually*, a woman, a mere speck in this creation, or how could she have believed that He would grant His prophet the power to relieve her? She knew, as all believing Israel did, that prophets were mere instruments in His Almighty hand, of themselves powerless, spiritless, as their less favored brethren. And, therefore, that

the Shunammite had a man of God through whom to seek, does not in any way prevent the example from bearing upon us. We have not Elisha, but we have still Elisha's God.

The way was not very long; but oh! the interminable period it must have felt to that poor mother's heart, till Mount Carmel was reached! And how could she know the holy man was there? for he was a wanderer through Judea. But the impulse leading in that direction was of the Lord; and even before her dim eyes discovered the Prophet, he had recognised her afar off; and, surprised, bade Gehazi run to meet her, and ask if it were well with her, and her husband and child? thus demonstrating how kindly and lovingly the human emotions were ever at work in the heart of the holy man. But to Gehazi she could give no reply, save as she had said before to her husband, "It is well;" hers was no grief to speak to indifferent ears. None but Elisha could assist her, and her heart was too closely wrapt in its own anguish to open to any but to him. Yet what stern command must she have had over her woman's nature to retain her calmness during this journey! Control never failed her, till she beheld the man of God, and sank almost powerless at his feet. She had reached him, indeed; but the energy which had sustained her throughout, seemed deserting her. She had no power to utter the entreaty with which her heart was filled. She could only clasp his knees, and gaze on his face, in agony, till roused by the kindly gentleness with which the prophet reproved Gehazi for seeking to thrust her aside. "Let her alone," he said, "for her soul is vexed within her; and the Lord has hid it from me, and has not told me." Then she said, "Did I desire a son of my lord? Did I not say, Do not deceive me?" The mother could not say her boy was dead. Faith was strong within her that he would be saved; and how powerfully does the very form of her address to the prophet betray the depth, the intensity of her feelings: refusing, even to him, to give vent to the torrent of grief and lamentation, and even of reproach, which would have burst forth unrestrainedly from a weaker and less superior mind.

Elisha needed no further information; and promptly he desired Gehazi to take his staff, and neither loiter nor speak by the way, till he had laid it on the face of the child. But this was not sufficient for the poor mother. "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth," she implored, "I will not leave thee."

None could be to her as Elisha, and he rebuked her not, nor denied her; his heart was too full of kindly emotions, and he arose and followed her.

But not to Gehazi was such a miracle vouchsafed; his coming to meet his master with the information, "the child is not awake," probably first convinced Elisha the event was of the Lord, and that the necessary power would be granted him. The restoring the dead was a greater miracle than he had yet performed; and as we find him saying, "The Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me," he perhaps at first supposed that the child was merely in a stupor resembling death, and the virtue of the prophetic staff would revive him. But Gehazi's words proved to him that the child was really dead; and he quickened his steps, and hastened to his own chamber, where the child lay, "and shut the door upon the twain, and *prayed unto the Lord.*" Words, how full of important meaning! In every other action of the prophet we find the prophetic spirit acting, as it were, instantaneously. The power intrusted to him for the good of the Eternal's chosen, as for the punishment of the unrighteous and disobedient, had seemed ready at his word. In this it was no consequence of his superhuman endowments, but simply the effect of *prayer unto the Lord.* He might foretell events, might multiply oil, render poison harmless; so feed a hundred men with twenty loaves, and a few baskets of first fruits, that they were not only satisfied, but left thereof! might bid iron swim, and know what the king said in his bed-chamber, though hundreds of miles away; but life and death were laid up with the Lord, and prayer only gave him power over the human frame.*

What a tumult of contending emotions must have oppressed the Shunammite during that awful interval! Let any anxious mother recall the time when the darling of her heart has been pronounced sick unto death—that there is *no* hope—death is fast approaching, when, in the wild agony of her despair, she has refused belief in the skill of him who has thus spoken, and sent or flown for the first physician of the age, and led him to the chamber of her child, and left him there, without the power of waiting for his decisive mandate, and then sunk prostrate in her own closet before her God, seeking to pray, but

* As is further displayed very strikingly in 2 Kings vi. 17, 18.

finding her words trembling, fearing, hoping, and only conscious that life and death are with the Lord, and, if He willed, the skill she had so wildly sought might save her darling still. Let any mother recall such periods of her life, and she may enter into the feelings of the Shunammite, as she sat alone in that interval of suspense, for her husband, still out in his agricultural employment, knew not of the suffering at home, and she had now none to look to in her agony, save her God.

Time passed; how long she knew not, save that she felt as if an age were passing over heart and head. Hush! Is it the prophet's voice? The mother started from her prostrate prayer, her head flung back, her very breath ceasing. "Call this Shunammite," seemed to have rung in her ears; but it might be only fancy, only the mocking torture of her bewildered brain. No! Gehazi is at her door—he calls her to his master, though he says not wherefore, and she does not look upon his face to read his tidings there. She stood within the prophet's chamber—she glanced upon the bed—her boy lived, breathed, smiled, stretched out his arms to her once more, and the voice of the prophet spake, "Take up thy son." And she sought to obey; but the spirit which had sustained her in sorrow, in suspense, departed now, and she fell at his feet powerless, voiceless, conscious only that her child lived—that the prayer of Elisha, and the compassionate love of Elisha's God, had given her back the dead.

And even when she recovered sufficiently to bow herself to the very ground, in silent acknowledgment of the power of Elisha, the mercy of her God, and, with her living child clasped to her bosom, retired from the chamber, leaving the man of God to the adoration and meditation which this great mercy called, still no word broke from that heart, so swelling in thankfulness and love that only tears might relieve it; and beautifully does this stillness continue to illustrate the character of this sweet and gentle woman, so controlled, so energetic in affliction, so calm, so still in joy—so full of deep, of intense feeling, sensibility, affection, yet so restrained within, that though all around her felt its blessed effects, alike in deed, and word, and manner, none knew its *extent* save her God.

Blessed as must have been the little domestic circle of the Shunammite before, it must have been thrice blessed from the restoration of her child. What must have been the feelings of

the husband and the father on his return, when told that, in so short a space, his treasured child had been snatched from him by death, and been restored? How must his heart have glowed in increased love and veneration for the gentle woman, who, rather than expose him to the agony of such intelligence, had buried it all in her own breast; and sought the prophet alone and unsoothed, and, through that energetic promptness, had been a lowly instrument in the hands of the Lord for the restoration of her child! Had she lingered in unavailing and probably complaining sorrow—had she permitted herself to fail in faith and prayer—she had not sought the prophet, nor would her child have been restored, for she would have been no fit receiver for such manifestation of almighty love.

The character of the Shunammite was not one to change or waver. We find her, at a later period, displaying the same retiring gentleness, yet dignified self-possession and energetic will. Some years must have passed, and from there being no mention of the Shunammite's husband in affairs which, had he been living, would have devolved upon him, not on her, we infer that she had become a widow, an inference confirmed by the previous statement that "her husband was old."

Elisha had never lost sight of her, but had probably continued to occupy the "little chamber," whenever he passed through Shunem. He advised a removal, which must have been both irksome and painful to one whose house had always been on one spot, and whose richest possessions consisted of the land, and flocks, and herds around it, which she could not carry away with her, nor for the safety of which provide. However, she had too much faith and trust to hesitate in obedience; and when the mandate of the prophet came, "Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn: for the Lord hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years," she unhesitatingly "arose, and did after the saying of the man of God: and she went with her household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years." A sojourn which would have been inexpressibly sad to such a true follower of Israel, had she not been cheered by the blessed thought of the Eternal's continued care for her. What was she in His sight? and yet, even by His prophet, He had deigned to warn her of the evil about to ensue, and provide for her safety, by permission to sojourn whithersoever she

would. In those seven years of exile, how much must have devolved on her to keep her son and her household faithful, and live as if they were still in their own land, and still guided by the counsels of the man of God! Can we not fancy the morning and evening prayer arising daily from that little circle of faithful hearts led by a woman's voice, and the Sabbaths and the festivals marking that lowly home a sanctuary before the Lord? Oh! if the heart be but true to its God, it matters little where its home is cast. The magnet points unfailingly to its answering star wheresoever the vessel glides. In tempest or calm, in cold or heat, it wavers not, or fails to guide aright; and so is it with the man whose heart, like the magnet to the pole, is fixed upon its God.

At the end of the seven years, the Shunammite and her household returned to Judea; but her home and land had been seized during her absence, and apparent ruin and privation in consequence was her welcome home. Some would have been ready to accuse Elisha as the cause of the evil, as having advised her removal. Others, again, would have demanded, or at least depended on, the prophet's influence with the king. The Shunammite felt and did neither. With calm self-possession she went herself to make her complaint before the king, and demand her house and land. This was no service in which Elisha's spiritual ministry was needed. It was no favor for herself, no advancement for her boy. The heart which had once answered, "I dwell among mine own people," to offers of reward, had not changed. As a woman and a widow in Israel, her sole plea was the justice of her cause.

But though with true feminine delicacy she had shrunk from appealing to Elisha in this emergency, the Eternal had so ordered events, that the prophet was in fact the true cause of the king's instant attention to her suit. It so chanced that the king was talking to Gehazi, and demanding a recital of the great things Elisha had done; and at the very time the young man was repeating the restoration of the dead child, the Shunammite herself appeared before the king, led into his presence by that very beloved child, now grown into manhood, of whom Gehazi spoke. "Behold, my lord, O king," he exclaimed, "this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life. And when the king asked the woman, she told him." And so strong an impression did the narrative make, that without hesi-

tation he appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, "Restore all that was hers, and all the fruits of the field, since the day that she left the land, even until now."

Gratefully must the Shunammite have recognised the hand of God in this instant judgment, from one whose character was noted for impotence and indecision—one whose very justice was ever likely to be sullied by caprice; for though we are expressly told in Holy Writ that Jehoram's character was not of the actively evil, as his father and his mother, Ahab and Jezebel, his whole history marks him one of those *fainéants*, whose indolence and weakness wrought almost as much evil in Israel as wickedness itself.

The energy which had urged the prosecution of her suit was indeed rewarded. Not only were all her possessions restored, but their full value, during her seven years of absence. Through *her* exertions, her boy received his inheritance; and from his non-interference, though he must have been quite of an age to assert his own right, what a powerful proof have we of the deep veneration in which the mothers of Israel were regarded by their sons! We hear no more of the Shunammite; but we have become sufficiently intimate with her sweet character to picture her declining years, full of piety, of that calm and beautiful dignity, which, if woman's in her youth, will never forsake her in her age. Full of love to God and man, of good deeds and blessed thoughts, it was for her, and for seven thousand such as her, who had not bowed the knee to Baal, that the Eternal, in his loving mercy, still restrained His avenging wrath.

The peculiar charm of the Shunammite's character is its *unity*, its harmonious blending of parts. In every position, adversity or prosperity, or that period of often greater trial than either—the uninterrupted routine of daily life—still we see her in the same calm and beautiful light, never turning aside from the beaten path of duty, never seeking more than the day may bring, and finding enough there, not only to occupy her, but to give her grace and favor in the sight of God. But though never apparently disturbed, her calmness was not indifference. All that we read of her betrays an under-current of intense feeling, which, while it caused her to suffer deeply, also endowed her with the purest susceptibility to joy. Feeling it was, that inspired that constantly working energy which never permitted her to sit down and weep when she could act, or remain satis-

fied with the mere expression of kindness, when she could manifest it in deed: and of that intensity of feeling, piety was the spring. No heart can rest indifferent when once awakened to a love of God, and, as must follow, a love of man. It was with no thought of reward she showed such warm hospitality to Elisha, yet from that one deed all her after-happiness sprang. He was the chosen servant of the Eternal; and a service done to him was an offering to his God. From first to last, the character of the Shunammite offers the beautiful lesson of *example*. Her good use of wealth and greatness—her moderation in all circumstances—her firmness in affliction—her absolute control of every emotion till her child was restored—her unselfish endurance of anxiety and anguish, rather than impart them to her husband—her calm, yet energetic prosecution of her son's rights—all these are points which every young daughter of Israel may admire and imitate, even though her position in life be different. We must exercise energy and self-control in little things, even in daily employments, or we shall never find them when most needed. We must set out in life with a conviction that we are destined for something worthier and nobler than the mere routine of frivolous employments and unmeaning recreations—that we are endowed with a heart and mind, for the proper use of which an account will be demanded; and sad will it be if we then feel, that the impulses and usefulness of both have been neglected, and opportunities, alike of virtuous deeds and beneficial feeling, have long passed us by unused.

And as women of Israel, even more powerfully should the history of the Shunammite affect us; her elevated character—her domestic and social influence—nay, the very mention of her as a "great woman"—the mention of her, instead of her husband or son, as the principally concerned in the whole narration—all convince us that even in such an era of national anarchy and discord, the women of Israel were in the full enjoyment of all the liberty and privileges, spiritual and temporal, granted them in the law of God. Her very piety, which obtained her such favor in the sight of God and of His prophet, is unspeakable comfort to us now. She had, indeed, the friendship and counsel of a prophet, which we cannot have; but her piety had life and influence at a period of much darker misery and sin, and rebellion, and idolatry, than we have to encounter now. To retain purity and faithfulness, to walk firmly in the very

midst of vast multitudes who so derided all true piety and adherence to the law of God as to endanger even personal safety, was a position of infinitely harder trial than is ours now. The Shunammite's being blessed with Elisha, raises no barrier between us. What the prophets were to the faithful in the olden time, the word of the Lord is now to us. We cannot too often dwell upon the truth, that the same gracious God who manifested Himself through prophets and miracles to our ancestors is ours still, and has granted us a record of His words and works, to give us strength, and hope, and comfort, till that glorious day when we shall be restored to our own land, and His almighty presence be again revealed.

The natural powers and endowments of the Shunammite were not superior to woman's capabilities now; and, therefore, that she found such grace and favor in the sight of God, as for Him, in his infinite mercy, to restore her child from the dead, should encourage us to follow in the same holy and rejoicing path. Events so marked as those in the Shunammite's history, may never be ours; but the piety of thought and deed is never passed unheeded by our God. The Shunammite was one of the seven thousand, who alone remained faithful amid countless millions. Let each of Israel's daughters determine to prove herself one of the faithful, which in every age is found, unseen, unrecognised, perhaps, by man, when mourning over *apparent* universal indifference, and falling away from the rock of righteousness; but known, recognised, aye, and upheld by God. Let her not think that, as a woman, her prayers and deeds are unavailing, save perchance unto herself. No! as a woman of Israel, she is one of the supporters of a temple which will last for ever; nationally, as well as individually, she is bound to forward the holy cause; and she may rest assured that her piety and faithfulness, even as those of man, will hasten "the great and glorious day of the Lord."

CHAPTER V.

LITTLE ISRAELITISH MAID.—HULDAH.—INFLUENCE OF WOMEN DURING THE MONARCHY.

THAT the Eternal often chooses the weakest and the feeblest, through whose unconscious influence to spread a knowledge of His ways and works amid the Gentiles, is proved by the mention of the little Israelitish maid (see 2 Kings v. 2, 3, &c.). In one of the predatory excursions of the Syrians into the north of Judea, they had carried off, amongst other booty, a little maid, who became the property of Naaman's wife. Naaman was the captain of the host of the king of Syria, a man of high rank and great valor, who had frequently been the means of deliverance to Syria; but he had become a leper, and was, of course, incapacitated from all public duties and domestic enjoyments. It must have been a sad change to the little maid of Israel; torn from the bosom of her affectionate family, and sold as a slave in the service of a heathen. But it is clear, from her recollection of Elisha, and her earnest wish that her master would go to him to be cured of his leprosy, that she was a child of one of the seven thousand faithful, and one who had been tenderly and spiritually brought up in the religion of her God; and, consequently, with firm faith in the power of His prophets. We can picture her child-like orisons, rising morning and evening in the language of her country to Israel's God, undisturbed by the heathen worship with which she was surrounded; lingering with fond affection on the memory of her parents, cherishing their instructions in her heart of hearts, and praying to God, as they taught her, to keep her undefiled, that she might bear witness to His glory.

The effect of *true piety* never fails to obtain the love and kindness of our fellow-creatures. The respectful deference of the young slave, her quiet discharge of her duties, her uncomplaining gentleness, though often visible sadness, had no doubt attracted the attention of her mistress, and called forth, not only

kindness towards the child, but led her to confide in her her own affliction from her husband's disease. A peculiar sanctity ever surrounded the Hebrews, in the eyes even of many ignorant and heathen nations. They were not only the Firstborn of the Lord in spiritual privileges; but, in arts and sciences, and all that marked them, almost an age in advance, both in refinement and intellect. It is not improbable that the wife of Naaman was questioning her young slave as to the treatment of Lepers in Judea, of which the child could give her but little information; but all she had heard of Elisha, we may imagine, flashing on her mind, the power he had received from the Eternal, the miracles he had done, the tender kindness his character had so often evinced, caused the instant exclamation, "Would God my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria; for he would recover him of his leprosy." There is no hesitation, no doubt —the very faith of a child satisfied that it was in his power, and he would do it. And so completely did that simple faith enter into the hearts of those who heard, that we find not only Naaman's domestics and Naaman himself, but the king of Syria acting upon it, the very instant that it was reported, "Thus, nd thus, saith the maid, who is of the land of Israel."

The story of Naaman's visit to Judea, and miraculous cure, does not enter into the plan of this history, much as we should delight in dwelling upon it, as so strikingly illustrative of the Eternal's loving-mercy, over *all* His creatures. Naaman was a heathen, and often an enemy to Judea; yet, when *he sought* the prophet of the Lord, even he was accepted, and a miracle performed in his behalf. How powerfully should this rebuke us, when inclined to pronounce harsh judgment on the religion of a fellow-creature, or arrogate to ourselves alone, or to those who think exactly with us, the sole care and love of our Creator!

How happy must the little Maid of Israel have felt, when she beheld her master perfectly cured; and the God of her fathers acknowledged and worshipped, as the sole and only one, by those who had so lately been heathens and idolators—"Thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering, nor sacrifice, unto other gods, but unto the LORD," Naaman had declared unto Elisha: and when she saw this change, how must the Hebrew child have rejoiced! That all had originated in her confident reference to the prophet, she probably never knew; but we see that she was the direct instrument in the Lord's hand, to bring

about the revelation of His power; she had glorified Him by trusting in His prophet, and so made both her God and His servant venerated in a Gentile land. But this would not have been had she been ashamed to confess her religion and her country before men. A solitary exile in the household of Naaman, young, and undirected by man, holier associations must have been powerful within her, to have prevented the adoption of the forms and customs, and even worship, of those around her. The childish faith which caused the exclamation and its consequences, as we have recorded, did not spring from the mere impulse of the *moment*, but from the education and subsequent thought of early years. That which springs from mere impulse would have been startled and terrified at the instant acting on the words; but to the child of Israel, there was no fear or doubt.

If then even a child, a female child, was permitted to be the means of bringing a heathen household to a knowledge of the only God, shall we not do all we can to make the education of our children subservient to the same great end? Amongst heathens and idolators, indeed, we do not dwell; but thrown, as we are so often, into terms of intimacy and kindness with those who worship God, though not as we do, it is more necessary than ever to infuse a national spirit amongst us; to inculcate into the very youngest of our families, who and what they are —that a solemn charge is intrusted to them, as *witnesses* of the Eternal—and that a denial or concealment of our true faith, and sacrifice of its ordinances, to assimilate with the world, is a denial of God Himself. Let us teach our children from earliest infancy to venerate and glory in their faith; and that faith will be respected in them by every Gentile with whom they associate. The law of God makes no distinction between the education of sons and daughters, and let us make none; both are equally children of Israel—and both equally heirs of all the spiritual and temporal privileges which that holy name includes. Let our daughters then feel and glory in their nationality; and by making the religion of their fathers the mainspring of their being, so serve the cause of God, and so elevate the character of Israel, that their very exile may hasten the day of our restoration, by bringing all the nations to a knowledge of the Lord. The youngest child may, like the little maid of Israel, bear witness to the truth of her religion, and the power of her God. An infant of

six years once had the moral courage, in the midst of an assemblage of Gentile children, and her mother was not present, to refuse touching some forbidden food, and with childish and most touching artlessness to say aloud that they were not allowed to eat it. And that infant upheld the sanctity of her religious ordinances, and inspired a feeling of respect and admiration, not only towards herself, but towards the religion she professed; and this is the practical nationality we should inculcate. Teach a child from the first that she is the depositary of a solemn office —that she can, in her own proper person, either elevate or degrade the religion which her Father in Heaven Himself deigned to give —that she is not like the children of the soil, for whom it is enough to follow the multitude, and who have advantages of all kinds to teach them their religious duty, but one of a peculiar and holy faith scattered in every land, exiled and often oppressed, yet still the first-born of the Lord; and, therefore, that it depends upon her, even as if she stood alone, to do all she can to raise her faith, and its blessed ordinances, in the estimation of the whole Gentile world.

We have now come to a very important character in our present period, with little to concern us as women generally, but much to encourage us as women of Israel; and sufficient in itself to give a direct denial to the accusation, that the Jewish religion utterly prohibits all spiritual and intellectual privileges; and that for a woman to attempt the study of, or instruction in, religion, is little less than folly. We have already seen a female judge and prophetess in the person of Deborah; but still, if she were the only female so mentioned, we might incline to the idea that women were thus sanctified only in the very first selection of Israel. Such, however, is not the fact; several hundred years had passed away—the kingdom of Israel was sinking deeper into the abyss of sin. Had there been any single portion of the law derogatory to woman, or confining her to a mere household sphere, with neither liberty nor inclination to employ her intellect and influence, now would have been the very time for such laws to obtain ascendency; the state of society must effectually have prevented her rising against it. If, however, we refer to 2 Kings xxii. 11—20, also to 2 Chron. xxiv. 20—29, we shall find a very different picture of woman in Israel.

The wicked kings Manasseh and Amon had been succeeded

by the youthful Josiah, at the early age of eight years. His mother's name, we are expressly told, was Jebidah, and her influence it probably was which so guided and instructed his youthful years as to make him very different from his predecessors. "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right nor to the left." In the eighteenth year of his reign, he gave orders for the repairing and beautifying of the house of the Lord; and it was when obeying this order that Hilkiah the high priest found the book of the law, which he gave to Shaphan the scribe, who, after reading it, brought it unto the king. What an awful picture do these verses present of the national apostasy; that the very high priest should have been ignorant of the existence of the book of the law in the house of God, and its enactments and prohibitions, of course, never read, as was so imperatively commanded, before the people—men, women, and children! The mere formula of high priests, scribes, and other officers of the temple, appeared still filled; but what a fearful mockery must it have been before the Lord—the mere empty shell, whence all of obedience, and love, and spirituality, had departed.

That the ordinances of the law were utterly disregarded, is evident from the effect which the hearing of the law produced upon Josiah. He rent his clothes (always a sign of intense affliction), and sent instantly the priest, and other superior officers, to "inquire of the Lord for me, and for all Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found, for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us." And to whom did these high officers go? to a mighty man of wisdom? to a holy man of God, whose sanctity and influence gave him courage to threaten and to warn, to risk personal danger from the anger of the populace, whom his denunciations might enrage? No; it was to a WOMAN that they came—a woman and a WIFE in Israel—and yet an inspired prophetess of the Eternal, the chosen medium between him and his people, the bold denouncer of his wrath, and the truthful reporter of his love.

"And Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asaiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the

wife of Shallum, the son of the keeper of the wardrobe (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college), and they communed with her."—Now, if the women of Israel were confined entirely to their household duties, it is strange that Huldah could have obtained admission within the college, which was probably an establishment devoted to the study of the law. Her being a prophetess does not make an exception in her favor, or render her dwelling in the college a necessary consequence. We have seen, in the cases of Elijah and Elisha, that the prophets had no appointed residence; but were, generally, wanderers and mere sojourners in the various cities of Judea. Deborah judged and prophesied under her own palm tree, between Ramah and Bethel. Huldah, on the contrary, dwelt in the college; and from the officers of Josiah seeking her without any hesitation, as the only one of whom they could inquire of the Lord, we are justified in inferring that her wisdom and piety had long been known and acknowledged in Jerusalem.

The prophetic power was never intrusted to the undeserving, man or woman; it was always some superior piety and virtue, which originally attracted towards them the loving mercy of the Lord, and rendered them worthy to become His messengers. No effort after righteousness and virtue, however lowly, passes unnoticed in His sight; and His love will ever increase the desire after good, and the power to accomplish it. But virtue and righteousness were not the only requisites for a prophet; they needed intellect, a profound knowledge of the law and of man, and a strong perception of the ways and works of the Eternal. Huldah's dwelling in the college supposes a mind anxious and inquiring after the study of the law, and a heart yearning to obey every statute therein commanded, while her very selection as a prophetess, proves that her spiritual privileges and intellectual powers were on a perfect equality with those of man.

Yet from the very circumstance of her only being mentioned once in the sacred record, we may be convinced that her solemn office interfered not at all with her domestic and conjugal duties, and that in no one instance she came unduly forward. Woman's natural sphere is to influence, not to command; to entreat, not to threaten; to lead far more by example than by precept; and every woman, conscious of her own weakness, will rejoice that such is the kind of duties assigned her. In the awful condition

of Judea, a mind like Huldah's must have shrunk from coming forward. The state of restraint, and subsequent depression, which must attend the intercourse of pious and believing hearts, with those to whom all of piety and spirituality are utter strangers, was probably the original cause of Huldah's religious retirement; seeking to conquer the suffering which the public and private condition of her country occasioned, by quietly following the daily routine of domestic duty, and spending every leisure hour in learning to know that merciful and gracious God, whom Judea seemed to have forgotten.

Possessed, as she was, of unusual spiritual gifts, her mind must have been of no ordinary cast, to allow her remaining contented in a retired sphere, without the restless desire to become of public service; her very consciousness of responsibility would urge this, without any failing of woman's native modesty. But Huldah *waits for the Lord.* He who had reposed in her a gift so precious would vouchsafe her some sign when to use it, and meanwhile her duty was to pray, and meditate, and beseech the Eternal to have mercy on His people. And this we can all do, though we are not prophetesses; and we have His whole word to prove how much intercessory prayer availeth.

The sign for which the prophetess awaited, came. The highest officers of the state suddenly approached her, and with humility and deference reported the sovereign's message, inquiring through her the mandate of the Lord. There is neither pause nor doubt, as there must have been had she been a mere pretender in the prophetic art: the rushing spirit of prophecy was poured within her by Him whose instrument she was, and with fearless dignity she answered, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: Tell the man that sent you to me, thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil on this place and on the inhabitants thereof; even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read; because they have forsaken me, and burnt incense to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore my wrath shall kindle against this place, and shall not be quenched." Then, softening into the tenderest compassion, still inspired by Him who ever tempereth justice with mercy, she continued, "But to the king of Judah who sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, As touching the news which thou hast heard; Because thy heart

was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes and wept before me, I also have heard thee, saith the Lord; behold, therefore, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered unto thy grave in peace, and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place; and they brought the king word again."

Although this prophecy does not properly belong to a history of the women of Israel, we have transcribed the whole, that our readers may better judge the full extent of prophetic power vouchsafed to Huldah; and the bold disregard of all, except of her mission, which it evinced. "Tell ye the man who sent ye," she says; yet she has no disrespect for the Lord's anointed, she was simply uttering the words of the Eternal. The persecution of Elijah and Elisha marked the prophetic office one of danger, but Huldah felt nothing but the spirit which inspired her; feared nothing but to fail in the calm and dignified boldness required of her as the prophetess of the Lord. The high regard in which her words were held, is proved by the messengers of Josiah "bringing the king word again," and by his continuing his endeavors to render himself worthy of the promised forbearance of the Eternal, though the threatened evil to his country and his people he knew could not be averted.

We have no further mention of Huldah, nor do we need more for the confirmation of our assertion, that the women of Israel enjoyed higher and nobler privileges, in the sight alike of God and man, than any other women in the world. Every former argument which we advanced in our notice of Deborah, is still more strongly applicable to Huldah. One great difference there was, which, however, only marks the national elevation of women still more forcibly. Deborah lived, and exercised her prophetic power, at a time when Israel was under the *direct guidance* of the Lord; Huldah flourished, not thirty years before the first captivity, and some centuries *after* the nation had, by their sins, thrown a dark cloud between them and their God. The laws and customs, which, according to our opponents, have crept in and sullied, if not entirely altered, the pure Judaism inculcated by Moses, *must* have been ascendant during the period of which we are writing. And in consequence, if

they degraded women, it follows that the domestic and social position of the women of Israel must, during the monarchy, have given positive evidence of such degradation; and we certainly should not find a woman dwelling in the college, which is synonymous with devoting herself to the study of the law, and also as the only one, in the whole nation of Judah, who was intrusted with the prophetic power.

To such a height in spiritual privileges, the women of Israel cannot now hope to attain; but the example of Huldah is sufficient for them to rest content that the study of the law, and all religious observances, as well as the piety of the heart, are now equally incumbent on them as on men, and equally acceptable before God: and that Israel is the only nation in the whole world in which women sufficiently gifted to perform the offices of Prophetess and Judge have been found.

These truths ought to be enough for us; and the very names of Deborah and Huldah serve as shields to guard us against all arguments tempting us from the Rock of Ages. We have said this often, but we cannot too often or too forcibly impress it on the female Hebrew heart. It depends on woman, not alone to *feel*, but to *prove* its truth; to shake off all of stagnating apathy, all of cold indifference: not to rest satisfied with a due performance of their duties as women—even as pious women,—but to feel and glory in being women of Israel, and infuse the same national spirit within the hearts and minds of their children.

Prophetesses, in our present captive state, we cannot have, nor do we need them, till the spirit of our God rests upon us in our own fair land once more; but we need the same bold uncompromising spirit, the same religious zeal and pious fervor which actuated Huldah. Did every woman in Israel determine to elevate her faith, and to glorify her God in her own proper person, apathy, and that fearful want of nationality too often discoverable amongst us, would vanish altogether. We should not be content with mere amalgamation with the Gentiles in society; but, without relinquishing the social position which an age of superior civilization and refinement has assigned us, we should still retain our nationality,—still, before man and before God, remain Israelites indeed; and thus compel respect towards our faith, and remove not only the prejudices excited by ignorance, but check the zealous efforts of conversionists by convinc-

ing them that our constancy, as our religion, must be indeed of God, and therefore no effort of man can turn us from it.

Nor was it to an unmarried, and therefore more independent woman, the prophetic power was granted. We are expressly told that Huldah was the wife of Shallum, the keeper of the robes; and we must therefore feel convinced that the marriage state in Israel was far from being one of slavery or dependence. How she contrived to unite her domestic duties with her divine office, holy writ does not inform us; but there is no doubt that both were fully accomplished; for the chosen messengers of the Eternal were ever those actuated by the tenderest human emotions, and the earnest desire to serve *all* the human family. We read Huldah's feminine nature in the fact of *her being sought* in her own dwelling. The condition of Judea must have filled her with the deepest suffering, but she left it in the hands of her God; content to perform his mission, when called upon so to do, but never forgetting, even in the furtherance of His service, the modest and retiring dignity of the woman.

And this is the union we should so strenuously endeavor to obtain. More than the females of every other nation, are the women of Israel called upon to cultivate their intellect, that they may be enabled to comprehend the religion of their fathers; that *reason* and *conviction*, as well as love and long associations, should bind it on their hearts. Yet that intellect must never be obtruded; never tempt them to quit their own holy and beautiful sphere. Woman may have opportunities for the study—aye, and the practice—of religion, which man has not; such study will never be in vain; opportunities of usefulness, of influence, will come to her: she need never seek them by the sacrifice of feminine gentleness and retirement; and man will thankfully seek that comfort and even guidance from her, which, had they been obtruded on him, he would condemn and scorn.

Oh! that the history of the past would influence the present; that the women of Israel would feel to their hearts' core, that they are still the same, in the sight of their God, as their ancestors of old; that they have it in their power, *individually*, to hasten that day when "the earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Piety must come from the *mind* as well as the heart; and the more the intellect is cultivated, the better will it enter into the

mysteries alike of Creation and Revelation, of the works and the Word of God; and the clearer these become, the purer, higher, more deeply spiritual, will be the emotions of adoring love, uniting the soul with God. We must not rest content with mere accomplishment; we must rise superior to the frivolity and excitements which form the existence of some women; or how can we become worthy, or make our souls worthy, to be once more the favored of the Lord? Women of Israel! the very name should impress our hearts with a solemn conviction of our individual responsibility, and urge us on to such spiritual and intellectual improvement as will mark us, in the eyes of the whole world, as worthy descendants of the first-born of the Lord.

We have now completed our review of the female characters contained in the Fourth Period of Jewish History. Our readers will, we think, universally agree, that it does not contain a single passage, much less a single character or incident, which demonstrates the social, domestic, intellectual, and spiritual position and endowments of women as enslaved and degraded. There is not a hint or allusion to any second law opposed to the written one of Moses; for if there had been, the monarchy lasted sufficiently long for it to have obtained such dominion as to make manifest its existence.

That man's evil and licentious passions had increased to an extent so fearful as to demand the captivity of the whole nation, is no proof of the imperfection of the law, but only of the imperfection of human nature. That the sins of the women increased the burden of Israel's guilt we do not deny, because the prophets so inform us. We merely affirm, that the *social condition* of women had not degenerated—that there were no laws then degrading and enslaving her: and, therefore, that as there were none then, there can be *none now*, as we acknowledge no other law of sufficient power to annul or contradict those given by the Eternal to Moses, and by him transmitted to man.

This important fact is strongly confirmed by the fearful wickedness of Jezebel and Athaliah. The former was the daughter of a notorious idolatrous king, and the mother of Athaliah; consequently we may indulge the comfort of the belief that neither was of Israel, and that such awful crimes stained not the women whom the Lord so blessed. There is no

occasion to bring forward their histories, subjects from which no good can be obtained, except that, in the creeping horror of the evil and the sin to which woman can attain, the prayer for help and strength, and freedom from temptation, may arise more frequently from our hearts. The fact of their influence is all we need, as confirming the assertion, that woman had both power and freedom in the land. Ahab's natural wickedness was fearfully increased, and made productive of still more horrible evil, by the counsels of his wife, as we must perceive by a very casual glance over his history; and of Athaliah we are expressly told, when speaking of her husband Jehoram, "that he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, for he had the *daughter of Ahab to wife, so he wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord.*" And, again, of her son Ahaziah, "he also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, *for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly.*" What can more forcibly illustrate the power and influence which woman could obtain and exercise in Judea? Had there been any law confining them to one particular sphere and debasing employments, not even the idolatrous wives and mothers of the kings could have obtained such ascendency. Nor was it only *through* kings, female authority was exercised. Athaliah reigned six years sole mistress of Judea; and we may be certain, that however low the nation had fallen, however the laws of Moses had sunk into neglect and abuse, still, had there ever been any portion of this law degrading to woman, Athaliah never would have had either the means of making herself queen, or supporting so high a dignity, even for the short space of six years.

The very fact, then, of there being such characters as Jezebel and Athaliah, is unanswerable confirmation of the freedom and equality of woman, because though they were *not women of Israel*, their union with the Hebrew kings subjected them to all the restrictions of the Mosaic law; and had that law made them slaves, they would not have exchanged their liberty in their own idolatrous countries for conjugal thraldom in Judea, the social and domestic position of the Hebrew females being sufficiently well known to them, from the immediate vicinity of the land, to prevent any misconception on a subject so important

And whilst we shudder at this picture of awful wickedness, and feel inexpressibly thankful that our merciful God has vouchsafed us a law, which, if obeyed, must effectually prevent

the dominion of such evil, let us not turn from it as an overcharged portrait, and believe that human nature is incapable of such heinous crimes. Alas! we have only to look into the annals of modern history, and even amidst those very nations who proclaim themselves so much more enlightened and spiritual than the blinded Jew—aye, and within the last four centuries we shall find women tempted to follow the same awful path, and instigating husbands and sons to the commission of crimes and massacres, from which the heart turns with loathing sickness, and the vain longing to realize disbelief in the story that it reads. And if so lately, comparatively speaking, such things have been even in enlightened nations, can we continue to think the Bible-picture of woman's depravity overcharged? Oh! we know not, we cannot know, the awful effects of unlimited authority and unrestrained passions on the weak human heart. We can only pray God to guard us from positions in which feelings may be aroused of whose very existence we dream not now; to bind closer and closer still His blessed law upon our hearts, His spirit on our souls; to remove from us all those evil inclinations and embryo passions which His eye may trace, but of which we are unconscious; to enable us to cling closer and closer unto Him in prayer and praise; and we shall be guarded, as by an angel's wing, from every evil thought and evil deed.

FIFTH PERIOD.

CHAPTER I.

THE CAPTIVITY.—REVIEW OF CHAPTERS ONE TO SEVEN OF THE BOOK OF EZRA.—SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE IDENTITY OF THE AHASUERUS OF SCRIPTURE, AND DATE OF HIS ROYAL FEASTS, &c.—CHOICE OF ESTHER.

A GREAT and melancholy change had taken place in the condition of the Israelites. Their continued disobedience and idolatry had, at length, called down upon them the long-averted chastisement; and in the land of their foemen were now their mournful dwellings. The great armies of Nebuchadnezzar had overrun Judea, and carrying off kings, priests, and people to Babylon, left their beautiful land to desolation.

But even in their captivity, a captivity which their sinfulness compelled, God had not forsaken them. All were not sinful, all were not disobedient, though all alike were exiled, and captives in a strange land. Even then the Lord raised up His witnesses. The firm constancy of the youthful Daniel and his companions, gave them examples of exalted righteousness in the very midst of darkness. The glorious visions of Ezekiel, yet more bold and sublime in imagery than the visions of any who had gone before him, inspired them with hope for the Future, and consolation for the Present; while, when the period of action came, such men as Ezra, Nehemiah, Zerubbabel, Haggai, and others equally earnest, were not found wanting in the furtherance of their holy cause.

The condition of the exiled Hebrews appears more that of colonists than slaves. Allowed to dwell together in large bodies, they became at length possessed of considerable property;* so

* Milman's History of the Jews, vol. ii. p. 4.

that many of them refused to return to their own land, even when the mandate of Cyrus gave them permission so to do. It seemed a strange and painful contradiction, this refusal to quit the land of their captivity, when, during that captivity, so many had yearned and wept when they "remembered Zion." Yet, that it was so, and that the return to Judea was by no means general, is a convincing proof to us that the *universal restoration*, of which every prophet speaks, *is still to be fulfilled.*

The chronology, nay, the very personages of the events we are about to regard, as identified with those flourishing at the same period in Profane History, are so entangled and confused, that a clear elucidation is impossible. Not only do Jewish and Christian chronologists differ as to national dates, but also amongst themselves. Josephus, following the arrangement of the Bible, places the History of Esther *after* the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. In the Jewish calendar,* Esther's being made queen and saving her people, takes place six years after Cyrus's decree for the return of the Jews; sixteen or eighteen before the building of the second temple and the departure of Ezra; and thirty before the rebuilding of the walls by Nehemiah. The chronology at the end of Bagster's Comprehensive Bible rather favors this opinion,—only differing in regard to the departure of Ezra, which he states to have taken place only one year after Esther's accession, five before Haman's plot, and thirteen before the petition of Nehemiah. Milman, in his history of the Jews, and Gleig, in his history of the Bible, again differ; the former agreeing with the authorities already quoted, in placing the migration of the Jews under Ezra, *after* the accession of Esther; and the latter agreeing with Josephus in placing him *before* it.

Now, in alluding to these differing authorities, let it be remembered, that we do not interfere at all with the grand question at issue between Jews and Christians, viz. the correct data of the creation of the world; the one placing it 3760, the other 4004 before the Christian era.† The Jew has demonstra-

* By E. H. Lindo, Esq.

† Even these are disputed: The Samaritan Pentateuch asserts the date of the creation to be 4700 B.C.; the Septuagint, 5372; Scaliger, 3950; Petavius, 3984: Dr. Hales, 5411; the Talmudists, 5344 (?) See note to Bagster's Comprehensive Bible, p. 1339.

tion of his correctness quite sufficient to satisfy himself, and prevent all adoption of the Christian supposition. All we wish to do, is to make the book of Esther clearer as to time and characters, and more connected with the books of Ezra and Nehemiah than is generally supposed. As, on a very careful consideration of the subject, both in itself, and in connexion with Profane History, our own opinion differs from all the authorities above mentioned, we will state it openly, as also our reasons for holding it—not at all compelling others to adopt it, nor as supposing it positively correct, but merely a suggestion founded on a careful study of the time. To bring it clearly forward, we must throw a cursory glance on the first six chapters of the book of Ezra.

The first chapter contains the celebrated proclamation of Cyrus; who, we are expressly told, was "stirred up by the spirit of the Lord," that is, the Lord put it into his heart to have mercy on the Jews; informing us also, that the heads of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, Priests and Levites, all whose spirit "God had raised," gladly hastened their return, bearing with them all the vessels of gold and silver of which Nebuchadnezzar had spoiled the temple, but which Cyrus now restored. In the second, we learn the number that return, their names, substance, and offerings: in the third, the exertions of Jeshua, Zerubbabel, and their brethren the high priests, in preparing for the work of the temple, setting up first an altar on which to offer the usual evening and morning burnt-offerings; the celebration of the feast of the tabernacle, new moons, and all the feasts of the Lord; in the second year of their return to Judea, and in the second month, the solemn foundation of the temple with shouting and with joy, mingled with the mourning of those who yet remembered the first house of the Lord, "so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people." In the fourth, we have the painful hindrance of the building by the adversaries of the Jews—their letter to Ahasuerus, king of Persia—and the royal prohibition to continue the building of the temple, believing it detrimental to the Persian power, by giving too much sway into the hands of the Jews. The Ahasuerus of the sixth verse of this fourth chapter is evidently Cambyses, son and successor of Cyrus—not the Ahasuerus of the time of Esther. In Profane History, we are told that he did not openly revoke the edict of

his father Cyrus; but greatly frustrated its execution, by many annoyances levelled against the Jews. This underhand kind of working is implied in the verse before us, which merely mentions the writing to the king an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

The Artaxerxes of the next verse is not the same sovereign, but the Smerdis of Profane History, the brother and successor of Cambyses; who, not satisfied with secretly frustrating the building of the temple, openly revoked the decree of Cyrus, and sent such letters to the adversaries of the Jews, as to make them "go up in haste to Jerusalem, and the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power." "Then ceased the work of the house of God, which is in Jerusalem; so it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius, king of Persia."

This tallies exactly with the dates and names of Profane History. Smerdis, suspected to be an impostor, was dethroned and murdered, and Darius Hystaspes elected in his room.

In the reign of Darius, we find, by the fifth chapter of Ezra, the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Iddo, prophesying to the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem; and, encouraged by this manifestation that the spirit of the God of Israel was still at work, Zerubbabel and Jeshua urged and helped the people again to set forward the work, disregarding even the threatening questions of Tatnai and Shethar-boznai; and "the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they should not cease till the matter came before Darius.'" A letter was consequently written to the king by Tatnai and his companions, stating all that had passed between them and the Jews, and concluding by entreating the king to let search be made "whether indeed it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king, to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter." It is clear from the words of this letter that some time had elapsed, and divers kings intervened since the decree of Cyrus; the tone is different to that in which Bishlam, Mithredath, and others addressed Smerdis—more conciliating and inquiring—not the determined opposition of the previous appeal. The letter, though written by their adversaries, served the Jews as fully as if they had appealed to the king themselves.

In the sixth chapter, we find that Darius did make the requisite search for the decree, which was found, and so fully

confirmed the statement of the Jews, that Darius instantly promulgated another decree, not only confirming that of Cyrus, but commanding the adversaries of the Hebrews to let the work of this house of God alone, so that the Jews and their governors might build it in the place appointed; and to give them help in forwarding the work, and in all that they needed for sacrifice, etc. That he who hindered it should be hanged on timber taken from his dwelling, and his house be made a dunghill; "And the God that hath caused His name to dwell there, destroy all kings and people that shall put their hands to alter and destroy this house of God, which is in Jerusalem. I, Darius, have made a decree—let it be done with speed."

A decree peremptory as this was of course productive of good. The building progressed rapidly: the elders being still more encouraged by the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah:—"And they builded and finished it according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the decree of Cyrus and Darius, and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia." This Artaxerxes, though not reigning at the time of the event here recorded, is introduced by Ezra, the writer of the book, in compliment to the favor he ever showed the Hebrews; and this Artaxerxes it is, who is, in all probability, the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther.

The remainder of the sixth chapter is devoted to the rejoicing of the children of Israel, on occasion of the dedication of their temple, the building of which was completed in the sixth year of King Darius's reign; their offerings; the establishment of their priests, "as it is written in the book of Moses;" the solemn celebration of the Passover "seven days with joy"—for they had been purified from the filthiness of the heathen, and the "Lord had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel."

So concludes the sixth chapter of the book of Ezra; and between that and the seventh, a period of some years must have elapsed. Darius reigned thirty-six years; Xerxes, who succeeded him, twelve; and it was not till the seventh year of Artaxerxes, consequently forty-nine after the completion of the building of the temple, that Ezra obtained permission from the king to go up to Jerusalem, armed with the royal repetition of the decree in favor of the Hebrews, and the rebuilding of the city, already promulgated by his predecessors Cyrus and Darius.

In this interval it appears, then, most probable that the events recorded in the book of Esther took place. Whether we believe the Ahasuerus so closely connected with her to be the tyrant Xerxes, according to Milman's view of his character, or Artaxerxes Longimanus, according to Josephus and other commentators; still the period of these events remains, unalterably, between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra, as we have stated before.

According to the events of Profane History, a period of sixty-three years must have elapsed between the decree of Cyrus for the return of the Jews, and the accession of Artaxerxes Longimanus. In the Jewish calendar we find only six. How this disparity can ever be reconciled, we know not, and must leave it to wiser heads than our own: suffice it, that the events narrated in the first six chapters of Ezra must have covered a longer interval than six years; but on such a subject our readers must search and judge for themselves; we offer no opinion to be adopted as the right one, and will willingly and thankfully receive any communication likely to elucidate this difficult point.

That the events of Esther took place *after* the decree of Cyrus, is, however, a truth on which there can be no dispute; and whatever number of years may have elapsed since the permission to return to Jerusalem, it is equally clear that an immense number of the Hebrews yet remained scattered over the large dominions of Ahasuerus, which we are told "extended from India, even unto Ethiopia, over a hundred and seven and twenty provinces," including, of course, Persia and Media.

Amongst these was a Jew of noble descent, Mordecai by name, a Benjamite by tribe; consequently, not one of the Ten Tribes, but of the two who had faithfully adhered to the royal house of Judah. In direct compliance with the law of Moses, which had expressly commended the fatherless to the care of their countrymen, Mordecai had brought up, as his own child, Esther, or Hadassah, the orphan daughter of his uncle, and resided with her in an establishment according to his rank, in "Shushan the palace;" meaning the city which was the usual residence of the king.

In the third year of Ahasuerus, the city of Shushan was thrown into a ferment of excitement, by the royal feasts given alike to princes and nobles, and to all the people, and lasting several months. The princes of the provinces were present; to whom, we are told, in the scriptural record, all the riches of his

glorious kingdom, and the honor of his excellent majesty, were lavishly displayed. And this excitement was followed by another;—the banishment of Queen Vashti from her royal estate, and proclamation made throughout the provinces, that all the fairest maidens were to be gathered together unto Shushan the palace, from whom the king might select a queen, in the place of Vashti. The extreme beauty of Esther, whose very name, in Persian, signifies *a star*, of course attracted the attention of the king's officers; and she also "was brought unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, the keeper of the women."

That this distinction was more painful than pleasing, both to Mordecai and Esther, we cannot for a moment doubt: the former, whose unwavering faithfulness to his religion has marked him amongst the most deserving and distinguished of our ancestors, was not likely to have connived at a union for his adopted child, which must prevent her strict adherence to her father's faith. That Esther herself was equally repugnant, we have the authority of the oldest Jewish writers; if her prayer in the Apocrypha be written by them. That the Apocrypha is *not* divine, we are quite aware; but as the writers of the Talmud do not disdain to quote from the "Wisdom of Solomon," as a good moral essay, *not* as divine, we may perhaps be permitted to regard the remaining chapters of the book of Esther in the same light; as an enlargement or commentary on the Bible-record of the same events;—not that Mordecai and Esther really did use the words of prayer which are there put into their mouths; but as a reflection of the opinions of our old writers on the subject.

To resist, or refuse compliance, would of course have been vain: and we find Esther winning such regard from Hegai, that he showed her more kindness and respect than to any other of her companions. Beauty alone could not have done this: for to loveliness, in all its varieties, he had no doubt been accustomed. But the cultivated intellect, the spiritual graces, of the Hebrew woman, which so marked her superiority over the females of every other nation, gave to the mere perishable beauty of face and form, an interest and a charm unlike every other; and this it was which so powerfully attracted the regard of Hegai, and, in due time, the devoted love of the king.

Some time (probably two or three years) must have elapsed between Esther's being taken from her adopted father's care, and her public proclamation as queen. It was in the third year of Ahasuerus that Vashti was dethroned; and not till the seventh that Esther was raised to the royal dignity in her stead. During this interval, "Esther had not showed her people, nor her kindred; for Mordecai had charged her that she should not show it"—a charge which appears to us somewhat strange and irreconcilable with the constancy and dignity evinced by Mordecai, and at a time that, though captives in a strange land, concealment of their peculiar tenets was not necessary for their safety. But if this part of his conduct be incomprehensible, or, at least, unsatisfactory, not so is the paternal affection which is forcibly betrayed in the simple words, "And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what would become of her." His child was removed from under his own eye, but his watchful love was with her; and Esther must have felt comforted in the consciousness that he was near her—his thoughts and affections with her still.

And could she need comfort, surrounded as she was with state and luxury? Alas! these are not the ingredients of happiness. Esther had been brought up with the greatest tenderness from her earliest years; from the situation of her people, perhaps, educated with even more than usual care in her father's faith. Her affections, habits, associations, all were confined to the house of her childhood—the father of her love. Was it nothing, then, to be torn from all these by an imperious mandate, and, at a moment's warning, debarred from the exercise of her faith, compelled to worship only in her own young heart, with no friend near to strengthen and to guide? Even the very idea of becoming queen, had she been one likely to be dazzled by so high a dignity, must have been fraught with terror, when she recollected the fate of her predecessor.

Thoughts like these were quite sufficient to have clouded the heart and mind of Esther, and rendered the change in her earthly lot more sad than joyous. But, from the favor she received, it is evident that she did not allow herself to murmur; the buoyancy of youth, too, was her own; and the very respect and regard which she received from Hegai, must have strengthened

her, to continue the same course of meek submission and trusting hope.

Her unambitious spirit and modest gentleness, we infer from her asking nothing but what the chamberlain appointed. Yet "the king loved Esther above all the women, and she found grace and favor in his sight;" and "he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes, and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a *release to the provinces*, and *gave gifts*, according to the state of the king."

This was in the seventh year of Ahasuerus, and it was in the seventh of Artaxerxes that Ezra obtained permission to go up from Babylon to Jerusalem, with a new decree, authorizing the return of all the Jews who wished it, and granting greater privileges to them, and more lavish gifts, than any king had yet bestowed.

Now, if this Artaxerxes of Ezra be the Ahasuerus of Esther, this event tallies exactly with the "release to the provinces, and the gifts made according to the state of the king," of which we have just read. Esther's parentage and faith were, indeed, not yet disclosed; therefore this favor to Ezra was not so much owing to her influence, as to the gracious mood and munificent rejoicings, with which the king greeted her accession as his queen.

The very words of Ezra, "Blessed be the Lord God of our Fathers, which hath put such a thing as this into the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem; and hath extended mercy unto me, before the king and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes!" imply that his request was made, and permission accorded, during some great public rejoicing, and in presence of all the king's counsellors and mighty princes. And thus, it is in exact agreement with the feasts and rejoicing which Ahasuerus gave unto all his princes and servants, when Esther was acknowledged queen.*

* We read in Ezra, that it was in the first month Ezra commenced his journey, and the fifth when he arrived in Jerusalem, "which was in the seventh year of the king;" and in Esther, that it was the tenth month when Ahasuerus first made her queen, in the seventh year of his reign, but this does not prove that Ezra's return to Jerusalem took place

It was during the rejoicings attending the choice of Esther as queen, that it appears most probable that Mordecai obtained that situation in the royal household, which is implied by his sitting at the king's gate. What office it was, does not appear. But he evidently had not occupied it before; preferring to remain in dignified retirement, as enabling him more strictly to attend to the ordinances and requirements of his faith. Affection and anxiety for Esther, was without doubt the real incentive to this change in his life. We have already read of his walking every day before the court of the women's house to know how she did, and what would become of her; and his

before the events of Esther. We will endeavor to make our meaning more distinct:—Queen Victoria, we all know, ascended the throne of England in 1837, on the 20th of June, which is, counting by the solar months, the *sixth* month; on the 20th June, 1843, therefore, she entered the seventh year of her reign. In the tenth month, which is October, 1843, we read, an insurrection took place at Barcelona. In the first month, coeval with *January*, 1844, the Spanish Cortes was dissolved; and in the fifth month, which was *May*, 1844, another revolution at Barcelona. Now, all these events took place in the *seventh year* of Queen Victoria's reign; but the events of the first and of the fifth months, occured *after that* of the *tenth:* and in exactly the same manner, Esther's accession as queen, and Ezra's migration, might both have taken place in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, and yet the event of the tenth month occur before that of the first and fifth. Tebeth was the tenth month; in the festive rejoicings which followed, lasting several weeks, as was the custom of royal amusements, and in presence of the princes and counsellors, Ezra made his request, encouraged by the release given to all the provinces. In Nisan, which is the first month, his preparations being completed, and the Jews wishing to depart collected together, he set off on his journey, and in the fifth month, which is Ab, he arrived in Judea; and still it might be all in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, granting which is most probable, that that monarch ascended the throne either in the sixth, seventh, or eighth month. This is of course differing with the Jewish calendar, which makes seventeen years elapse between Esther's being made queen and the departure of Ezra; but then, who is the Ahasuerus of Esther? And who is the Artaxerxes of Ezra? They cannot be the same persons. Josephus, again, makes Xerxes the Artaxerxes under whom Ezra and Nehemiah go to Jerusalem, and asserts that this migration took place *before* Esther: this appears not only historically but scripturally incorrect. But to reconcile all the differing opinions is impossible; we must leave it, as we have said before, to our readers to judge for themselves, only stating that the opinion we have advanced is founded on a careful research of both *scriptural* and *ancient* history, an examination of all the opposing points, and the adoption of that which appears most reconcilable with the narrations of both Profane History and the Word of God.

seeking an office in the king's household, evidently proceeded from the same affectionate cause.

There is a dignity about Mordecai, in the simple fact of his concealing his relationship with the petted and all-powerful queen of Ahasuerus—in his pursuing, undisturbedly, the calm and meditative tenor of a good man's way, which we cannot fail both to reverence and admire. It was enough for him that he was one of the chosen children of God; what higher dignity could he have?

"Esther had not yet showed her kindred, nor her people, as Mordecai had charged her: for *Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.*" How eloquently illustrative of her sweet and gentle character! She was of that tender age, when the mind and temper are more liable to take the impression of things and characters around them, than to remember and act upon the education and impressions of earlier years. She had been two or three years completely separated from personal intercourse with her adopted father. She had received nothing but indulgence; was translated from a lowly and retired home to be the sole possessor of a monarch's love, and the sharer of a mighty kingdom—surrounded by luxury and adulation: and yet, so unchanged was her gentle mind and loving heart, that, in her high estate, she did "the commandment of Mordecai, as she had done in her childhood and her youth." The faith of her fathers was the safeguard; for strangers and heathens were around her: the pleasures proffered were all tinctured with earth and time. In the spiritual, the deathless part of her nature, the youthful Esther was alone. How perseveringly and religiously must Mordecai have trained her infant years, that even in this utter loneliness, she could yet have steadfastly trodden the one strait path, and never wavered in her duty, either to her guardian or her God.

So some few years passed on, the exact number we cannot ascertain from the widely differing chronologists. During that interval, a conspiracy had been formed against the king by two of his chamberlains, which becoming known to Mordecai, he imparted it to Esther, and by her it was "certified to the king in Mordecai's name." Inquisition was made into the matter, and the facts being discovered, the plotters were hanged, and the account written in the chronicles of the Persian kings.

The instrumentality of Mordecai appears, however, to have been entirely forgotten, though doubtless Esther's influence increased. Had he come forward himself with his important discovery, he would, no doubt, have at once received the honors afterwards bestowed; but he heeded them not, and the whole affair sank into oblivion with regard to man, but not so in the Divine economy of God.

CHAPTER II.

ESTHER (CONTINUED).

"AFTER these things," we are told in Scripture, which is a term always signifying some lapse of time, the exaltation of Haman took place. Raised, through the favor of the king, above all the princes that were with him, the royal household vied with each other in doing him reverence, such being the command of the king; but "Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence." He who neither seeks nor cares for ambitious advancement and earthly honors himself, acknowledges them not in others. Haman, also, was an Agagite or Amalekite, one of the idolatrous nations whose iniquities were such as to demand the signal punishment of the Eternal—an enemy from the first to His people: and, therefore, the very race of Haman would have been sufficient for Mordecai to refrain from noticing him. But even had he been of different lineage, the law of the Hebrews strictly prohibited all unseemly veneration to mere mortal man, as unbefitting those whose adoration was to be paid to God alone. We do not, therefore, at all agree with Milman's supposition, that it was merely because they were rivals in earthly ambition, that Mordecai refused to do reverence to Haman. We have already seen that Mordecai had had opportunities enough already to aggrandize himself, but had neglected them all; and, in fact, the word of God itself favors the inference, that his reason for refusing to do Haman homage, simply was, because "he

(Mordecai) was a Jew." The servants of the king spake daily to him, demanding, "Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?" and seeing that he "hearkened not to them, they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand, for *he had told them that he was a Jew.*" This was a bold and fearless statement, exactly in accordance with the character of Mordecai as already displayed. He had made no show of his religion, when there was no necessity so to do; but his freely avowing it as his reason for refusing undue reverence to a man, and an Amalekite, ought to convince us that his desiring Esther to conceal her race and faith proceeded from no unworthy or cowardly motive—however we may fail to discover a satisfactory reason why he should have done so.

Haman, full of wrath that any one should dare hold him in contempt—a wrath no doubt increased, when he heard that the bold man who did so was a Jew—one of a despised and captive people, determined on a signal revenge. That some connexion existed between Mordecai and Esther, was, no doubt, secretly suspected by him: to attack Mordecai alone, would therefore avail him little, as he would be protected by the queen. The destruction of the whole Jewish people, if he could but procure the king's consent, might involve Esther (of whose influence he was very probably jealous) as well as the hated Mordecai; and the mandate once gone forth, according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, was, he knew, unalterable.

That nothing might fail him, he cast lots, according to the superstition of his age and country, to discern what month would be most favorable for his project. The lot, guided by a merciful Providence, who was permitting the temporary ascendency of evil only to bring forth permanent good, fell on Adar, the last month in the year. It was then Nisan, the first month, and therefore twelve months intervened; an interval doubtlessly hailed by Haman as allowing the entire destruction of the Jews, even of those situated in the remotest province of the empire; but which was in fact their salvation.

With consummate caution Haman proceeded. Working upon the usual jealousy of the royal prerogative, he alluded to a certain people, who, dispersed amongst all the king's provinces, followed a worship and laws of their own; that it was not to the king's profit they should do so; insinuating, no doubt, that they were likely, from their disloyal practices, to turn others also from their

allegiance and their gods: it would be wise, therefore, to have them destroyed—and, that the king's coffers should not suffer, the wily minister concluded his counsel, by a promise of paying ten thousand talents of silver into the royal treasuries.

The instant accordance of Ahasuerus with this cruel counsel, by giving into Haman's hand his royal signet to do with the people as seemed good to him, certainly more resembles the character of the capricious Xerxes than the mild and benevolent Artaxerxes Longimanus; but then, in the brief record of Scripture, we can hardly know all the subtle counsels of a minister already high in his master's favor. The noblest and best monarchs have at one period or another been liable to be led by evil ministers.*

Whoever the monarch, thus much is certain, the horrible decree went forth over the vast domains of Ahasuerus, and consternation and mourning took possession of the hapless people, who, men, women, and little children, the old and the young, were condemned to be destroyed on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, and all their possessions to become the spoil of their destroyers. Can we imagine a situation more appalling? To know the fate impending—each day, each month to draw it nearer—and yet to have no power either to resist or fly; to feel themselves hemmed in by destined murderers—men whom, perchance, they were in the habit of meeting in terms of kindly fellowship, turned into ruthless destroyers, simply from a monarch's word? Yet such was once the awful condition of the Hebrew people; and it was the Eternal's will, that by a *woman's* instrumentality they should be saved.

"When Mordecai perceived all that was done, he rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry; and came even before the king's gate: for none might enter clothed in sackcloth. And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes."

* We need but instance Isabella of Spain, who, one of the most noble, most magnanimous, aye, and most humane, alike as a sovereign and a woman, was yet persuaded into the expulsion of six hundred thousand of her innocent subjects, as an act, not of policy, for that was against it, but of *religion*.

Then was the time, had Mordecai been other than we assert he was, for him to have concealed his religion, not by his public mourning to proclaim that he, too, was one of the doomed. But such was not his conduct. When all was peace amongst his people, he was content to remain in seclusion, to practise and to love his faith, without obtruding it by outward appearance of sanctity and holiness. Many of his brethren might, perhaps, in secret, have condemned him as lukewarm to the interest of his nation, or he would long before have made use of Esther's influence for their peculiar benefit. They might, and probably did, accuse him of scarcely belonging to them; but, in the hour of their affliction and danger, they learned differently. He was in very truth among, and of them; and the eyes of all turned to him alone for help and guidance.

Esther, meanwhile, had continued in the retirement of the king's palace, still his best beloved wife; yet retaining all the affection for her adopted father which had characterized her youth. That Mordecai was very closely connected with her must have been generally suspected, else we should not find her maids and her chamberlains coming hastily to inform her of his strange proceeding; but so ignorant were they of its cause, as to excite in us the supposition that his religion, and that of Esther, were still not publicly known. They merely mentioned that Mordecai was clothed in sackcloth and ashes, as in deep affliction, but made no allusion to the decree.

"Esther was exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not." Yet still he spoke not the cause of his grief; and Esther, unable to follow the dictates of her own heart, to go to him herself, sent Hatach again to him, with her roval command, to know what it was, and why it was; thus blending the dignity of the queen with the affection of the child, and compelling his reply.

Her silence at first might have proceeded from the momentary hesitation, as to whether or not he should involve Esther in the danger of her people. Her race and faith were still unknown; why should he betray them at a time when their betrayal threatened death? The affection of a father might have struggled with the feelings of the patriot: but ere Hatach returned his decision was made; and imparting the designs of Haman, and the decree which had thence proceeded, he sent a copy of the writ-

ing to Esther, charging her to go in unto the king, and supplicate him for her people.

For her people—the fatal words were said, and her race revealed; he could not withdraw them, and the decree from that moment equally extended unto her, as to the humblest of her brethren. How fearful must this intelligence have been to the young queen; and yet more fearful, if possible, the alternative proposed. We see at once, that her feeling towards her husband was fear, not love; by her shrinking from his presence, unless expressly called. The favor with which she had been regarded from the first, would, had she been a woman of a bold, intriguing spirit, have given her such influence, as to obtain access to her husband whenever she willed it, regardless of all laws to the contrary: but even the impending and wide-spreading danger could not conquer Esther's natural terror. It seemed easier to let the decree proceed, and share the fate of her people, than call down the monarch's wrath by intrusion into his presence: and the very fear endears her to us, proving that it was no unnaturally endowed heroine, but a very woman of whom we read.

"Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai: All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out his golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called into the king's presence these thirty days:" probably an unusual lapse of time, which, supposing a decrease of the royal favor, naturally increased Esther's shrinking repugnance from the task proposed.

But Mordecai's plan was already fixed, and this answer was instantly returned: "Think not to thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether hold thy peace at this time, then shall enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: for who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

These last words give us the solution of Mordecai's confidence, alike in the influence of Esther, and the eventual deliverance of

the Jews. His heart, ever faithful to his fathers' God—ever watchful to trace the superintending Providence which guarded his people as the shepherd his flock, had solved, as by a flash of light, the mystery before surrounding him. He knew now why, in preference to every other maiden, his precious child had been called to that high estate which he had mourned, as uniting her with heathens, and dividing her seemingly for ever from her people and her faith. The Eternal, in His wisdom and His mercy, had placed her there, that she might be the chosen instrument, in His hand, for the preservation of His people. Convinced of this, despondency and doubt passed from the heart of Mordecai. He felt almost with a prophet's certainty, that deliverance would come for his people; and, therefore, in words that sounded almost stern, in their total disregard of woman's feelings, he called upon her to perform the part for which she had been raised to the kingdom—to listen, not to the voice of fear, but to arise and speak, else would she herself be destroyed, aye, and her father's house (which included Mordecai himself), and deliverance arise for her people from another place.

It is evident that his confidence extended not to her, though with meek submissiveness she made no further resistance to her guardian's will. There is a deep and mournful meaning, breathing through her gentle answer—a hopelessness, yet self-devotion, which must twine her round our hearts, as one peculiarly unfitted for the terrible ordeal.

"Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and *if I perish, I perish.*"

No undertaking, of whatever nature it might be, was ever commenced by the Hebrew nation without earnest prayer and fasting—not by the act of fasting to obtain favor in the sight of the Merciful Being who has no pleasure in the affliction of His creatures; but by abstinence from all corporeal enjoyments to give the spirit ascendency over the clay, and better enable us to attain that perfect commune with our God, which, in periods of supplication, we so much need. Though in the Book of Esther only fasting is named, yet evidently prayer is understood, for to the Hebrews the first was wholly useless without the second;

and in the beautiful prayer written by the author of the remaining chapters of Esther in the Apocrypha, we read in what light her character was regarded. We will transcribe it entire, entreating our readers at the same time to remember, that we do not regard it as inspired, and therefore as the *actual prayer* used by Esther on the occasion, but simply as a proof of the feeling with which she was considered by the ancient writers; and that they too supposed with us, that her queenly state was a matter far more of loathing and repugnance, than of pride and joy.

"And she prayed unto the Lord God of Israel, saying, O my Lord, thou only art our King. *Help me, desolate woman, which have no helper but Thee.* For my danger is in mine hand. From my youth up, I have heard in the tribe of my family, that Thou, O Lord, tookest Israel from among all people, and our fathers from all their predecessors, for a perpetual inheritance; and Thou hast performed whatsoever Thou dost promise them. And now we have sinned against Thee; therefore hast Thou given us into the hands of our enemies, because we worshipped their gods. O Lord, Thou art righteous. Nevertheless it satisfieth them not that we are in bitter captivity; but they have stricken hands with their idols, that they will abolish the thing that Thou with Thy mouth hast ordained, and destroy Thine inheritance, and stop the mouth of them that praise Thee, and quench the glory of Thine house, and of Thine altar; and open the mouths of the heathen to set forth the praises of the idols, and to magnify a fleshly king for ever. O Lord, give not Thy sceptre unto them that be nothing; and let them not laugh at our fate, but turn their device upon themselves; and make him an example that hath begun this against us. Remember, O Lord, make Thyself known in time of our affliction; *and give me boldness, O King of the nations, and Lord of all power. Give me eloquent speech in my mouth* before the lion: turn his heart to hate him that fighteth against us, that there may be an end of him, and all that are like-minded with him. But deliver us with thine hand, *and help me that am desolate, which have no other help but Thee. Thou knowest all things, O Lord; Thou knowest that I hate the glory of the unrighteous, and abhor the bed of the uncircumcised and the heathen. Thou knowest my necessity; for I abhor the sign of my high estate which is upon my head,* in the days wherein I

show myself that I abhor it, *and that I wear it not when I am private by myself. And that thine handmaid hath not eaten at Haman's table;* and that I have not greatly esteemed the king's feast, nor drunk the wine of drink-offerings. *Neither had thine handmaid any joy since the day I was brought hither to the present, but in Thee, O Lord God* of Abraham. O thou Mighty God above all, *hear the voice of the forlorn*, and deliver us out of the hands of the mischievous, *and deliver me out of my fear.*"

Well, indeed, must the writer of the above prayer have been acquainted with the female heart, and consequently with all the secret suffering which Esther's exaltation occasioned her individually. No thought of her own influence—no recollection that the king loved her above all others, could give her confidence sufficient in herself. Taught from her youth up to recognise the God of Israel as the guardian of her fathers—as the only Being who could come forward in their help—to Him she looked alone—and she could look to Him with confidence; for in the years she had been compelled to hide her parentage, she had sought Him as her only pleasure and only consolation. She had worn her crown because it was His will; but it was but a weight and sadness; for in her private hours it was ever laid aside—she felt now, in her hour of intense supplication, the full comfort of previous and intimate commune with her God, and her trembling heart was strengthened.

Some natures could not have borne the delay of three days, in the full anticipation of a trial; they must have gone at once to the king, or failed in power to go at all. Yet such natures, in a mere casual view, would seem far stronger and bolder than Esther's; and therefore demand and obtain greater admiration. But it is the exquisitely *feminine* character of Esther that is to me her peculiar and touching charm;—it is the still undercurrent of deep feeling, which betrays itself throughout her history, and which is so peculiarly woman's—the power of uncomplaining endurance—the firm reliance on a higher and all-merciful power for individual happiness—the absence of all trust in her own gifts of beauty and eloquence, unless so blessed by Him as to soften the heart of the king towards her—the courage, not *natural*, but acquired through prayer—the conquest of her own weak tremblings, and venture of her own life, for the welfare of her people—and this not the mere impulse of the moment,

but pondered on through three days incessant prayer; these are traits which surely must rivet our interest and our love.

CHAPTER III.

ESTHER (CONTINUED).

CLOTHED in unwonted gorgeousness, and radiant in her extraordinary beauty, but her heart, at that awful moment, scarcely able to realize the holy strength and trust which prayer had wrought, on the third day Esther stood in the dreaded presence of the king: and though uncalled, and therefore disobedient to the law of the Persian kings, God gave her grace in the monarch's sight; and, instead of displaying anger, he held forth his sceptre towards her, and she drew near and touched it in sign that she implored a boon. In the Apocrypha we are told that faintness overpowered her, a natural portraiture of feminine weakness, and depriving her at once of all those attributes of a heroine, which would divide her from our sympathy as a being differently endowed to ourselves. Prayer *had* given her strength, else had she not thus stood uncalled before Ahasuerus; but the mind, strong as it may be, cannot always bear up its mortal shrine; and by the description of the deadly terror, depriving Esther of sense and speech, given by our ancient fathers, we see at once the awful struggle she was enduring.

Her beauty, her very terror, all strongly excited the king's affection; and, hastening towards her, he soothingly exclaimed, "What wilt thou, Queen Esther, and what is thy request? It shall be even given thee, to the half of the kingdom."

How blessedly must these words have fallen on Esther's still quivering heart! Yet, not at that moment dared she utter her request, fearful lest its boldness and extent should change the royal mood. She, therefore, merely besought him, "if it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day

unto the banquet that I have prepared for him." The invitation was accordingly transmitted to Haman, and he and the king went in unto the banquet which Esther had prepared.

It was a strange proceeding: this commencement—inviting the deadly enemy of her people to her private banquet—aggrandizing him as it were still more—rendering her own task more fraught with danger—and filling the minds of her countrymen with doubts as to the purity of her intentions towards them. It has ever seemed to me that Esther's conduct, with regard to the two invitations, before her boon was spoken, proceeded not from previous design, but rather from *impulse*, which she followed as supposing it the inward direction of the Eternal; but which, when accepted, startled even herself. But to retract was impossible; and the daughter of Israel, radiant in her loveliness, entertained the king and his prime minister at her private table.

Again did the king reiterate his inquiry and his promise, "What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? even to the half of my kingdom it shall be performed." And again did Esther fail in the necessary courage to give it words; and, instead of her weighty boon, we find her simply saying, "If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to-morrow as the king hath said."

Her concluding words betrayed that she had yet another boon; and her trembling spirit was probably reassured by the graciousness with which the invitation was accepted. Haman, too, left her presence rejoicing and triumphant. Little could the wily plotter dream that the God of her people was with Esther, inspiring the words of her mouth; and that this very exaltation was the forerunner of his fall. But yet, in the very midst of his triumph, as he left the palace, Mordecai, who still sate at the king's gate in his sackcloth, stood not up, nor moved for him; and Haman's indignant wrath caused the exclamation, that riches, prosperity, gratified ambition, regal favors, all availed him nothing, so long as he saw Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. To disperse these gloomy thoughts, he entered eagerly into the counsel of his wife and friends; and a gallows was erected fifty cubits high, while his blackened mind revolved

some tale, the which to bring the king on the morrow, that his consent might be obtained for the instant execution of the man he abhorred.

But that same night others also were wakeful. Surely we may picture the young queen wrapt in earnest and fervid prayer, still for strength and grace for the pursuance of her entreaty: was she not a weak and trembling woman, whose only strength was PRAYER? Thousands were destined to the destroyer; if she held back, who would arise and save? and, in that nightly vigil, when fear and doubt are so often magnified and darkened, what could she rest on but her God?

Nor was she the only wakeful one in the royal palace. Even as she prayed, the Eternal answered; and His guiding mercy was at that very moment so ordering events as to prepare the way for her successful petition. Unable to sleep, Ahasuerus, towards morning, commanded the chronicles of the kingdom to be read before him; and it so happened that the roll opened on the conspiracy against himself, which Mordecai had discovered. Imparted to the king as it had been by Esther, the names and minute particulars had passed unnoticed, more especially as Mordecai had always so shrunk from public notice. But, read now from the records of the kingdom, the king's attention was irresistibly fixed; and he demanded "What honor and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this?"—"Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him." The king, self-reproached at the neglect, and determined not to expose himself to forgetfulness again, inquired, "Who is in the court?" And on being told that Haman stood without, commanded his instant admittance. "What shall be done?" he asked, when the minister appeared, "unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor?" And puffed up by his inordinate pride and vanity, Haman thought in his heart, "Who can the king delight to honor more than myself?" and advised a triumph, which would make him second only to the king. But when, elated with his own description, and convinced he was advising his own triumph, these words came—"Do even so to Mordecai the Jew, who sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken;"—how can we attempt to describe the fierce rage of vindictive passions which must have taken possession of Haman's heart? How attempt

to portray the black emotions with which the baffled plotter must have walked beside the splendidly caparisoned charger, on which, robed in the king's apparel, sat his detested rival? And no comfort waited him, when, mourning and enraged, he sought his home. "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews," they told him, "before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him," words which prove how forcibly the estimation in which the Jews, as the chosen and beloved people of God, were held by the nations around them, even by those who called them captives.

But little time had Haman to ponder on further schemes of vengeance. "While they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hasted to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared." Again had the queen assembled around her all of gorgeousness and festivity to gratify the luxurious taste of the Persian king. Her beauty, heightened by successful adornment, concealing under the graceful courtesy of the hostess the tremblings of the petitioner—fear probably becoming more and more intense with every passing moment—longing, yet fearing for the king to speak those words which must impel reply. And at length they came, coupled as before with the royal promise of fulfilment for whatever she might ask; and she, who had fainted from very terror when first in presence of the king—who had felt so powerless to speak from the very magnitude of her boon, now boldly and firmly answered:—

"If I have found favor in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: for we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage." Few manifestations of self-devotion are more touching and complete than these simple words of Esther. We have seen and known the extent of her human fears—she might have worded her petition as in no point to include herself, but she scorned it—she might have been divided from her people in periods of prosperity and peace, because such was the will of Mordecai; but not when danger and death threatened. Their fate should be her own; and fearlessly she included herself with them. Whether or not Ahasuerus at once associated this people for

whom Esther implored, with those destined for death by the machinations of his minister, we cannot determine; but by his instant question—"Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?" we are induced to suppose that he did not, but imagined it simply some plot against the life and immediate kindred of his queen—a supposition likely enough to excite the fierce wrath, which, when his long-favored minister, Haman, was accused as the adversary and enemy, caused him to leave the banquet in much disorder, and pace the palace garden, endeavoring so to pacify his anger, as calmly to decide. Haman, meanwhile, had fallen in deadly terror and agonized supplication on the couch, where, in accordance with Persian fashion, Esther had reclined during the banquet—a posture of apparent familiarity, rousing the monarch to yet greater fury; and guided by his gestures even more than his words, the guards present seized Haman, and covered his face, an Eastern custom existing still, and signifying that the criminal is condemned to instant death. Harbonah, the chamberlain, at the same moment came forward with the information of the gallows prepared in Haman's house for Mordecai, who had acted so faithfully towards the king; and Ahasuerus, still more incensed, commanded him to hang Haman thereon. The royal command was instantly obeyed, and then only "was the king's wrath pacified."

This summary mode of proceeding may seem strange to modern notions and civilized customs; but it is in exact accordance with the despotic government of the East, not only in a time so long past, but even now, when the bowstring is the instant executor of punishment. Trial, and witnesses for and against; the minute examination into facts, and the deliberate sentence of judgment, are all utterly unknown to this day in the East; and, therefore, the instant chastisement of Haman in no way marks the sovereign as the capricious tyrant, which, identifying him with Xerxes, some historians represent him. Egregiously deceived as he had been so long in his prime minister; who had dared, as he supposed, to compass the life of his dearly beloved queen and her kindred, and who had secretly and vindictively prepared a gallows for the death of one who had saved the king's life—all these circumstances were quite sufficient to rouse an Eastern temper into such fury, as could only be calmed by the death of the offender. Nor did the monarch stop here.

He gave unto Esther the whole house (probably the rich possessions) of Haman; and then it was that the queen revealed her near relationship to Mordecai, and her faith; and Mordecai came before the king, and received from his hand the ring, or signet, which Ahasuerus had taken from Haman, as a symbol that he was now prime minister in his enemy's place. "And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman."

But personal safety and aggrandizement were not the intention of the noble Mordecai and his courageous child. Falling prostrate at the feet of her husband, Esther besought him with many tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his evil schemes against the Jews—imploring, "If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces: for how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? and how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"

She could not have framed her petition in words more likely to reach the heart of the sovereign, than by making the cause of the Jews so completely her own. A mere entreaty for them as a people unjustly sentenced to destruction, would not have been thus successful; but she identified them with HERSELF. In their low estate—in their impending danger, she appealed for them as *her* people, *her* immediate kindred, that life would be joyless were they destroyed; and her eloquent appeal was granted, for her beauty, her gentleness, her very deference and respect, had rendered her all-powerful with the king. Full permission was given to her and Mordecai to write as it pleased them; "for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's seal, might no man reverse." Scribes were accordingly summoned in all haste—scribes who could write in every language of the hundred and twenty-seven provinces, to the lieutenants, and the deputies, and the rulers: "Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that *would assault them*, little ones and women, and *to take the spoil of them for prey*;" and copies of these writings were forwarded by riders on mules, camels, and

young dromedaries, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment.

Vindictive as, in a mere superficial view, this decree may appear, it was imperative, for the Jews could be saved by *no other* means; the writing that was once written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, could never be reversed —the laws of the Medes and Persians, once passed, were unalterable, however unjust or tyrannical they might be. Ahasuerus had commanded the entire destruction of the Jews; he could not *annul* that edict, and, consequently, was impelled to grant Esther's entreaty, by issuing another, desiring the Jews to defend themselves, even by the death of those who, in compliance with the previous decree, should assault them. A mode of proceeding very repugnant to present notions, but which can only be judged by the customs and laws of the past.

We find in Josephus another reason for this destruction of Ahasuerus's subjects. Alluding to some words in his letter to the governor, Josephus says in a note, "These words give an intimation, as if Artaxerxes suspected a deeper design in Haman than had openly appeared—that, knowing that the Jews would be faithful to him, and that he could never transfer the crown to his own family, who were of the posterity of Agag, the old king of the Amalekites, while they were alive, and spread over all the Persian dominions, he endeavored to destroy them. Nor is it to me improbable, that those of the Jews' enemies who were soon destroyed by the Jews, by permission of the king, were Amalekites, their old and hereditary enemies (Exod. xvii. 14, 15); and that thereby was fulfilled Balaam's prophecy, 'Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be, that he perish for ever' (Numb. xxiv. 20)." *

If this be well founded, it is a most agreeable solution to what appears, on a superficial reading, such indiscriminate slaughter on the part of the Jews. It was the fulfilment of Divine prophecy on a race whose exceeding wickedness had for so many centuries marked them out as objects of the Eternal's wrath; and His people were but instruments in His hands, instead of the fire or plague, with which, had it pleased Him, their destruction would equally have been brought about. But to return to Esther.

* Josephus, Book xi. chap. vi. note to p. 229 of second volume.

With what joy must she have beheld the termination of all her fears and inward struggles in the salvation and glory of her people! Her beloved guardian, Mordecai, was now acknowledged and honored by prince and people, as his many years of unpresuming worth deserved. "He went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honor. And in every province, and in every city, wheresoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them."

And this, under the God of her people, was a WOMAN'S work —wrought not by beauty, or power, or any of those arts which but too often guide the female favorites of monarchs, but solely by the STRENGTH of PRAYER. We have seen the tremblings of her gentle woman heart—that she had entered on the plan, with the conviction that she was risking her own life—that her own death for intruding upon the sovereign's presence was far more likely than the preservation of her people, else wherefore the words, "And if I perish, I perish." All this we have seen; and can we hesitate a moment in the belief, that strength, eloquence, all she needed, were *infused* by the Hearer and the Answerer of prayer—that they were not of herself? How had she commenced this terrible undertaking? By three days and nights passed in fasting and prayer, the long period proving in itself the extent of her shrinking fears, the magnitude of the task in which, simply in obedience to Mordecai, she had engaged; and when we remember how her work *commenced*, can we not rest satisfied as to the how it *concluded?* The sacred historian passes on to more eventful matters, to more public and national concerns; but we, lineal descendants of this fair and noble Jewess, shall not we accompany her to the same retirement, where she had fasted and prayed, and behold her again prostrate, not now in agonized supplication, but in glorified, rejoicing adoration!—tracing the hand of her God in all—hearing the answer to her fervent prayer in the shouts of joy and triumph which rose from the city without—in the honorable exaltation of Mordecai—in the pure delicious feeling that she was no longer lonely in her high estate; the Guardian of her infancy, second

only to the king himself, would ever be beside her. Her faith known, and still herself beloved! Oh! that in itself must have removed a mountain of lead from her bounding heart. Hundreds, aye, thousands of her people were saved in one brief day from death; and she had done this, her words—hers—weak, trembling woman as she was! How might she bear the weight of joy—the magnitude of the success! heavy to humanity as was the magnitude of the terror and the boon; no heart, moulded as was hers, could have contained it, save in prostration before Him whose sole work it was. The burden of joy, as the burden of grief, *must* find vent before our God—must pour back its gushing tide into the living fountain whence it sprang, or it will crush the heart which holds it; and can we doubt that these were Esther's feelings, because we find them not in written words? Oh! let every right-feeling woman look within her own heart, and place herself in Esther's position, from the very beginning of her dreaded task to the completion, and then say how could such joy be borne, save as we have pictured it, in adoration of the Lord?

We have only one more public mention of Esther in the book bearing her name (except her writing to confirm the second letter of Purim), and that mention, according to the opinions of some, destroys the beauty of her character, and makes her appear in a vindictive and unfeminine light. We, ourselves, once shrank from the verse, and wished it had not had existence; but a more matured consideration removes the objection, and completely exonerates Esther from the bloodthirsty vengeance with which she has by some historians been charged. Even Milman, usually so just and moderate, speaks of the barbarous execution of the ten sons of Haman as proceeding from her request, when in fact they were *already slain*. Verses 12, 13, of the ninth chapter of Esther, are those to which we allude.

In the Jewish law, the gallows was *not used* as it is now. The criminal was always executed first, either by stoning or strangling, and only the dead body suspended upon it as a further mark of guilt and ignominy; and also to deter others from following the sinful example. Esther's request that Haman's ten sons might be hanged on the gallows, had nothing whatever to do with a vindictive desire of vengeance upon them for their father's sin. They had been already slain amongst the enemies of the Jews in Sushan; slain most probably in their own assault, for

the Jews were not to *attack*, but merely to *defend*. "They gathered together, we are told, to lay hand on *those that sought their hurt.*" And the governors and rulers, lieutenants and deputies of the king, all helped the Jews. Consequently those who assaulted them were their determined and hereditary foes, resolved, from the great hatred they bore them, to act on the king's first edict, even if the second should cost them their lives. Amongst these, of course, were Haman's sons, who, Amalekites and Agagites like their father, were the Jews' most deadly foes; and the foremost in assault, falling in strife, and stricken by the God whom their iniquities had profaned, through the swords of His people. The 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th verses of this same chapter (the ninth), specify them by name, amongst the slain, which is confirmed by the words of Ahasuerus himself in the 12th verse, "The Jews have destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the *ten sons of Haman*," etc. And that Esther should have made her request, that her people should do on the morrow as they had done the preceding day—and that Haman's ten sons should be hanged upon the gallows, proceeded from no unfeminine or vindictive feeling; but simply from the wish that the future safety of the Hebrews should be fully secured. As an individual, and judging by her previous truly feminine character, Esther would, without doubt, have shrunk from the awful retribution which the plot against the Jews had wrought. But she was denied the privilege of thus judging and thus acting: on her depended the present honor and future security of a people, liable to be trodden under foot at every capricious change in the mood of their captors; not alone in her own time, but years after. Guided most probably by the counsels of Mordecai, Esther was compelled to resort to those measures, which were likely to deter their enemies from future attacks. The ignominious exposure of the dead bodies on the gallows—sons of the onetime mighty and all-powerful, all-ambitious Haman—would bring more forcibly than aught else to the minds of men, the palpable evidence, that the Most High God still watched over His people, and turned every evil thought against them to the evil and the ruin of their connivers. And the request of the second day's defence is but a proof that the deadly haters of the Jews were not yet subdued, but were likely to spring up again more inveterate than before. Esther's words are, "Let it be granted to the Jews to do

to-morrow according unto this day's decree; and that decree was to *defend*, not to revenge—to *protect themselves* against the assaults which by the previous edict would be made; not to slay and cause to perish, and take the spoil, as had been determined against *them*. Esther, therefore, issued no order of blood and vengeance, of which she is sometimes accused, nor were the Jews guided by any feeling but that of *self-defence;* else we should not read, more than once repeated, that even in the homes of their deadliest foes, and with the royal decree to appropriate all to themselves—"*On the spoil laid they not their hand.*" Not in Shushan alone, but in every province and every city where they gathered together and stood for their lives—where the richest and most tempting spoils must have offered themselves to their very grasp—still "*on the prey laid they not their hand.*"

Was this a war of revenge, of national aggrandizement? What could have prevented, had they so desired, the entire subjection of the whole Persian kingdom? What people, save the people of God, in those dark times, would have been satisfied merely to stand on their own defence, goaded, as they must have been, by the entire destruction and inveterate enmity working against themselves? But the wars of the Jews were never, from the first of their selection as the Eternal's chosen, actuated by either ambition or revenge.

A reference to our first volume (Chap. III. of the Third Period) will give the causes and intention of their first wars, the reduction of the Holy Land, *not* for personal aggrandizement, but in direct obedience to the direct command of the Eternal. In looking further on, through all the different phases of Jewish history, we find no mention of wars undertaken for aggrandizement or private revenge. Their wars were always defensive; and, though richly gifted with all the noble and heroic qualities necessary to warriors and heroes, they were nationally a peaceful and pastoral people, satisfied with the lands assigned them, and with becoming wealthy through the direct blessing of their God. We never read, as is so often the case in the histories of contemporary nations, of acts of private revenge, or public dispute settled by the sword. No personal appropriations of acquired spoil—no inroads from one tribe to another, as, even in modern times, is so often the case with nations who are divided into clans or bodies. Whatever wars are read of, as

undertaken by the Hebrews, are either by the direct command of their heavenly King, or in their own defence.

Glancing, then, back on the Bible history regarded in this light, from the selection of Abraham to the time of Esther, we cannot find one incident or trait to justify the idea, that the slaughter of Ahasuerus's subjects proceeded from any revengeful or vindictive motive, but was simply in *self-defence*. We cannot draw any inference contrary to the supposition, that it was the Eternal Himself who ordained and permitted this destruction, not alone because of their designs against His people, but because they were the descendants of a most sinful race, and inheritors and promulgators of iniquities and abominations which the God of Truth and Love abhorred, and for which he had, from the very first, sentenced them to chastisement and wrath.

Looking upon it in this light, all over-refined notions must pass away. It is idle, in such an incident as this, to condemn our noble Ancestress as vindictive and revengeful, because her request shocks our individually sensitive notions. We must take a wide grasp of the whole character and bearing, not of Esther alone, nor of the Jews in Persia alone; but of the general character of the nation in the *past*, and how their *present* danger was likely to affect them in the *future*. We must recollect that they were still captives—still liable to persecution and intolerance—to be attacked and slaughtered, at the very first caprice of the despotic monarchs under whom they lived.

Even as Ahasuerus had been persuaded by the specious reasoning of a favorite minister, so might be other monarchs. It was therefore the special care of Mordecai and Esther to adopt every means for the *future* security of their people, not alone for their *present* safety; and in that barbarous age, and still more barbarous people, no measures were so likely to be efficient, as the public degradation of Haman's family, and the noble stand made by the Hebrews against their idolatrous oppressors. The Jews had probably been considered a poor-spirited, unnerved people, likely to bend beneath oppression, and to be easily subdued. Their spirited defence, however, taught their adversaries a very different lesson; not only that the God of Israel was with them still, but that they possessed within themselves all the attributes of an heroic nation, who would never fail in the assertion and protection of their rights; and who, were the

necessary liberty of action allowed them, would never tamely submit to the insults and oppression which they had endured.

In reading and reflecting over this history, let us never forget the important truth so often repeated, that "on the spoil the Jews laid not their hand," because this one brief sentence is sufficient to convince us, that no revengeful or rapacious feelings actuated our ancestors. In the edict issued against *themselves*, not only their lives were to be destroyed without any regard to age, infancy, or sex, but their possessions were to have been confiscated to the king's treasury—they were to be spoiled as well as slain; and they might have retaliated. All which had been decreed against them, they were at perfect liberty to have turned upon their foes; but they scorned it. The same spirit which caused Abraham to refuse the gifts of Melchizedek, lest he should say, "I have made Abraham rich," actuated them to touch not one item of the vast stores, which, from the awful amount of slaughter, might have been their own. Accused as we have so often been of love of gold above all other love—of seeking, by honorable or dishonorable means, to increase our worldly stores—of grasping and rapacious dispositions—let us point to this simple line, "On the spoil laid they not their hand;" and the charge is at once proved false! Let us look back on this—on a hundred other similar traits in our history—and our national character will stand forward as free from such ignominious stain as any other nation in the world. What, if our modern history seem to contradict this, and the sneerer and the scoffer point to the usurers of the middle ages, and, dilating on their wealth, their rapacity (so called), their grasping minds and hardened hearts, in such opprobrious colors portray the Jew? What, if they do this? They prove nothing—nothing to tarnish the national character of the Hebrew, as proved in the momentous records of the past, and confirmed by their giving up all of wealth and greatness, rather than their religion, in their expulsion from Spain,—but much, much against themselves, in the fearful effects of persecution and intolerance, which they have hurled upon the people of the Lord.

The Book of Esther concludes with the establishment of the festival of Purim, which, observed as it is by every class and every denomination of the Jews throughout the world to the present day, is in itself a convincing evidence of the perfect truth of the whole history. The 14th and 15th days of Adar were

ordained to be "remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them *perish from their seed.* Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim." And from that time it has been observed by every man, woman, or child, bearing the honored name of Jew. Its ordinance and confirmation is the last mention which we have of Esther *by name;* and, therefore, her after influence with respect to the favor shown her people can only be conjecture. Yet if the Ahasuerus of Esther be indeed Artaxerxes Longimanus, the Artaxerxes of Ezra and Nehemiah, surely we may be justified in the theory (which we acknowledge to be a favorite one), that the ready granting of Nehemiah's petition, and the subsequent favorable edicts issued for Jerusalem and the Jews, originated in the love borne by Artaxerxes for his lovely Jewish queen. We are told that Mordecai the Jew was next unto King Ahasuerus, and great amongst the Jews, and accepted by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed." He no longer refused a situation of dignity and trust, because it was bestowed upon him as a *Jew.* He had no need either to deny or conceal the religion of his forefathers. He had been chosen to succeed Haman in dignity and favor with the king, because he was of Esther's kindred and Esther's faith; and, his duty marked out for him, as his pious mind must have felt, by God Himself, it would have been but mock modesty to have shrunk from the high estate and honors with which its performance was associated.

The lofty beauty and retiring dignity of his previous character are not yet, in the smallest degree, infringed by his acceptance of the office proffered. The welfare of his people was ever the uppermost in his thoughts; and if he could serve them better in public than in private life, he would not shrink from the notoriety attendant on his doing so. We read, "that he was accepted by the multitude of his brethren," meaning that they regarded him with the same deep love and reverence which they had felt towards him in his low estate. No envy, none of those bitter feelings so often excited towards greatness, could actuate them towards him; for he sought "but the prosperity of his people, the peace of all his seed."

If Mordecai retained so much influence, years after the events which had occasioned his accession to greatness had faded into the past, it is not likely that Esther retained less. Her public and private positions must both have been very much happier than before. Her influence over the heart of her lordly husband had been acknowledged, by a concession, which, in a Persian Emperor, was as unprecedented as it was extraordinary. That it either created or heightened love towards him, we cannot doubt, for it is not in woman's nature to receive such manifestations of kindness and forbearance, without giving some warmth in return. Besides, he knew her faith, her race, and yet he continued, nay increased, his favor towards her: thus proving forgiveness of her previous silence on that important point. The beloved guardian of her youth was ever near her, second in rank to the king himself; her people honored and protected; and many who had before been heathens, embracing the covenant of the Lord, and swelling the Hebrew ranks; and all this, under the blessing of the Eternal, had been achieved by her *conquest over herself*, and her influence with the king. Was it likely, with such memories, that Esther would sink into a mere nonentity in the Persian Court? That she would not, even as Mordecai, use all her influence for that holy people to whom her whole heart still clung? And when we think attentively over all this, her character, her eventful history, her power over her husband, may we not, in some degree, be justified in the supposition, that the Artaxerxes who permitted the departure of his favorite Jewish cup-bearer, Nehemiah, and gave him letters to the keepers of the king's forests, and to the governors, &c., in furtherance of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and to insure the safety of the Jews in Judea, was the same monarch, who, under the name of Ahasuerus, had already so favored them in Persia?

The very fact of Nehemiah, a Jew, being the chosen cup-bearer to the king, and evidently in such high favor that the sadness of his countenance attracted even his royal master's notice; the remarkable coincidence that the king's court was still in Shushan the Palace, the very scene of Esther's request, and the favorite residence of Ahasuerus, when every other notice of the kings of Persia placed them in Babylon; the particulars mentioned, by Nehemiah, of the *queen being by the king's side*, when the petition was made; all confirms the above supposition, and gives rather a solid foundation to the conjecture of Esther's

influence forwarding the suit of Nehemiah, which we have with all humility advanced.

The character of Esther, as an individual and a female, possesses many traits to call for admiration and love. She was not, indeed, a heroine; nor do we perceive in her that peculiar energy and promptness under danger and trial which we have noticed in the characters of Abigail and the Shunamite; but the very want of this quality is consoling, proving, as it does, that the most timid, the most essentially feminine, may be permitted to accomplish great ends, and become instruments in the Eternal's hand for the welfare of His people. Energy of purpose and of action, though essentially woman's attribute, is yet a portion only for the few. There are more to resemble Esther than Abigail; and to those that are timid and fearful, and shrinking from an imperative duty, or some imposed task,—who would rather remain in sad quiescence than make one effort to conquer an imagined destiny—to them—we would point the consoling moral of Esther's history, and beseech them, like her, to arm themselves with the arrows of fervent prayer, in the very face of inward tremblings and a failing frame, and to go forth and do, and leave in kinder hands the rest.

Esther's quiescence and obedience to her destiny was necessity. Chosen as the bride of a heathen monarch, desired by Mordecai not to show her people or her kindred, debarred from all her friends, and pleasures of her earlier and happier years, it was her duty to submit patiently and calmly; and her gentle and enduring character enabled her to do so less sufferingly than more energetic minds. But we see that to endure was less painful to her than to act, by her repugnance to go forward when the call of duty came. Her spirit, instead of being roused by the extreme emergency of the case, shrank back appalled: and to brave the king's anger, by venturing uncalled into his presence, seemed far more terrible than the danger threatening thousands. To *share* their fate appeared easier far than to court it; and even when, in obedience to Mordecai, she promised to seek the king, it is very evident that her anticipation was failure —and death. Had Abigail or Deborah been in her place, their different characters would scarcely have required even the direction of Mordecai; their own energy would have urged them forward, and supported them by the inward promise of success.

But that Esther did not naturally possess this strength and firmness, renders her conduct yet more worthy of our grateful admiration. We see her displayed before us, in her woman's weakness, as, indeed, one of ourselves. We behold her in not one point, except in her surpassing loveliness, our superior; nay, to bring her closer to us still, she is a captive in a strange land, even as we are now; and yet was she, this weak trembling girl, the savior, the benefactor of thousands; and her name has come down through thousand ages, wreathed with the admiring love of that very people whose ancestors she saved.

To do as she did, to be exposed to the same awful ordeal—of a monarch's wrath, or a people's preservation—is, indeed, not ours; and we should be grateful that it is not; but how often will the annals of private life demand as mighty a conquest of self in woman! How often are we called upon to subdue, or, at least, entirely to disregard natural weakness and disinclination, and go forward, when we feel so wholly incapacitated from the task proposed, that we would more gladly sit down, and let the waves of care and sorrow roll over us, than make one effort to stem the rushing torrent, and make evident the supremacy of MIND over CIRCUMSTANCE, of the WILL over EVENTS! There are trials and exertions in private life demanding such courage and firmness to meet, that we often feel as if the frame must sink under them; but still, like Esther, let us go forward, feeling it may be with her, "if I perish, I perish," rather than draw back from the path of duty. Life and death are not with us, but with the Lord; and, in His hands, how often does anticipated death become rejoicing life; and the thunder-clouds, which we feared to meet, dissolve, when boldly fronted, into sunshine and bliss. Suffer, indeed, we *may* and *must*. Even the approval of conscience—the conviction that what we do is undoubtedly right, and a blessing will spring from it—will not shield us either from inward trembling or mental pain. Physical weakness itself will cloud and blacken our mental vision. The blood disturbed by unusual exertion will flow unequally; sometimes so sluggishly, that further efforts appear impossible, and mind and heart both feel stagnant; sometimes so wildly and hotly, that the whole frame feels one mass of *nerve* and irritation and ill-temper, even towards those we most love, impossible to be avoided. The very comfort, even the power of Prayer, is gone

from us. But, in such times (for they *must* come), let us only remember that we are suffering *physically*, and nerve our minds to bear them; even as we would some bodily pain, or sickness, the source of which is so much more easy to be traced. Let us not shrink back, because we feel as if we were doing nothing; as if our former fears told us right, and we are too weak, in constitution and in mind, to be anything but a burden, and had, therefore, better sit down, and *endure*, instead of rising up to *act*.

Had Esther, when, overcome with natural terror, she fainted in the presence of Ahasuerus, given up her purpose, because she felt so utterly incapacitated, both mentally and physically, from pursuing it—her people would have perished, and she herself have been either swallowed up in the universal destruction, or sunk into a mere soulless, spiritless nonentity; her whole life embittered by the consciousness of what she *might have done*, and what *she did not do*. But we have seen that she did not draw back, though the stoppage of every pulse, from pure terror, evinces the struggle with natural feeling,—which it was.

We do not find her deploring her constitutional timidity and wishing she possessed the energy of others. No; the fount of living waters, whence Esther derived the strength and determination which she so much needed, to go forward, is open to us all. It was incessant and most fervent PRAYER. The God of compassion and love, who hearkened unto her, is still our God —and will grant us the same strength and firmness for our individual duties which He vouchsafed to her. Let us not suppose, for a single instant, that only in great emergencies He hears us. Esther prayed to Him, and conjured others to pray for her to Him, in this danger, only because she had known the efficacy of prayer in *little things*. "Neither had thine handmaid any joy since the day that I was brought hither, to this present, save in thee, O Lord God of Israel!" She had been accustomed from her youth upwards to look on Him, and pray to Him, as the Saviour and Father of her people and of herself; and, therefore, she knew and felt that now, in this great danger, and most repugnantly-accepted task, prayer only could be her strength.

And, without this infused strength, oh, what is woman!—a reed, liable to be turned by every passing wind, or crushed

before the slightest storm; to bend to the soiling earth, and, clogged with the particles of dust and taint, which, in its prostration, will cling to and deaden it, find it a weary, if not a hopeless task, to lift up its drooping head towards the pure heavens again.

But let us not imagine, because mentally and physically we are weaker than others of our sex; because we have no energy, no firmness, no self-support (if we may be allowed the term), that we are to pass uselessly and wearily and despondingly through life—that the Bible gives no sympathy or encouragement to such as we—and, therefore, that nothing is expected from us! Nothing can be, when we are so different, so much weaker than our fellows. Alas! alas! for those who hug themselves in such comfortable belief; and when the day of reckoning comes, behold what they might have done—behold it, and in the agony of remorse, yearn to do it, and yearn in *vain!* How know we, but our punishment after death may be to look on all which in life we have neglected; to awaken, as by a flash from Heaven, to its awful consequences; and to know no rest, no sleep, in the wild yearning to perform it, and to feel we have no more the necessary power—and this through weary, weary time, which in Heaven has no measure, in eternity no end! It is an awful thought; one it would be well to ponder on ere it be too late.

That the Bible does give both sympathy and encouragement, even to the most constitutionally weak, is proved by the sweet, gentle, feminine character of Esther. Strength of herself, indeed, she had none; but it was asked, and granted; and so it will be unto all.

To the women of every faith, race, and land, then, her history is alike instructive and inexpressibly consoling; but it is in the hearts of her descendants, the women of Israel, she should be most closely shrined. By us, the festival of Purim should be hailed as something more than a mere rejoicing season, or even as the anniversary of a great redemption. Every woman should take it to her own heart, and remember, with holy joy and thankfulness, that the preservation of her people, which that day recalls, was, under the Eternal, the work of a woman not stronger, not more gifted than herself. God might equally have worked by other means; but that He did choose so weak and frail an instrument, is right, indeed, to be a source alike of consolation

and rejoicing unto us; and strengthen each and all of us in the hope that we, too, may become instruments in His hands for good.

It was not that Esther was a free agent, or had powers more extended than our own. Though the wife of a mighty monarch, she was captive; and so too are we.

We, too, may individually be thrown into positions begirt with sadness, where the rites and ceremonies of our faith must be adhered to in the secresy of our own hearths and hearts. Yet may we still be ready at the first call to identify ourselves with those who suffer for our faith—still be enabled to serve the good and holy cause. And those unshackled by peculiar positions, following so publicly and unquestioned the religion of Moses, that they are likely to forget they are the Lord's captives, because man makes them his equal—to whom life is such a quiet routine of uninterrupted employment, that the idea of individuals serving our nation is regarded as a tissue of folly and romance: yet even these can serve the cause of the Jews. We can, each and all, determine to honor our religion ourselves, and so make it honored. We can infuse such seeds into the hearts of our sons, that Judaism may never want defenders, or such representatives as will raise it, even in its captive state, in the respect and consideration of the nations. Yes! though through the infinite mercy of the Eternal, such intercession as Esther's is no longer needed, still let us emulate Esther in the elevation and the acknowledgment of our holy faith—in our individual adherence to its spirit and form, through every difficulty and through every woe. Let every returning festival of Purim find us as women, and in our own retired spheres, still loving, still knowing, still working for our holy religion, and determined, through social and domestic conduct, to make its glory, and its comfort, and its beauty, evident to all. *We* shall not see the fruit of this still and silent working; but we shall feel its efficacy in the calm and tranquil gladness of our hearts and homes.

CHAPTER IV.

REVIEW OF THE EVENTS NARRATED BY EZRA AND NEHEMIAH.

BEFORE we conclude this Fifth Period of our subject, we must take a brief review of the condition of our ancestors contemporary with the captives of Babylon; but who, under Ezra and Nehemiah, had returned to Jerusalem. The first captivity caused a complete revolution in the history of the Jews. Their very characteristics as a people, and as individuals, appeared to have undergone a change.

Adversity and captivity retained the Hebrews in that faith, and those forms, which in their prosperity they had neglected and despised. Men arose from their ranks, gifted with such power as to lead the multitude as with a silken thread—to sever even the strongest and most endearing ties, because such was the word of the Lord, such the law He had ordained. Marriages with the heathen were not alone again forbidden, but actually dissolved. The Sabbath-day, cleansed from the profane employments of buying and selling which had before desecrated it, commanded to be kept holy; an ordinance established amongst the priests, "to charge themselves yearly with a half shekel for the service of the house of God, for the shew-bread, and the continual meat-offering, and the burnt-offering of the sabbaths and the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin-offerings, to make atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God;" a covenant, entered into under "a curse and an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses, the servant of God; and to observe and to do all the commandments of the Lord our God, and His judgments and His statutes."

Nor was this solemn covenant entered into by the *males* of Israel alone. Their *wives* and their *daughters* are distinctly and emphatically named (see Nehemiah x. 28), as amongst those who had voluntarily separated themselves from the people of

the land unto the law of their God, "every one having knowledge and understanding." And in chap. viii., which so impressively and affectingly describes the reading of the law by Ezra, in the presence of the whole congregation of Israel, the *women* are also expressly mentioned. "And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and *women*, and all that could hear with understanding," etc. "And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and *women*, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the words of the law."

The scene must indeed have been of mournful interest. The temple was still unbuilt; the city, by far the greater part, in ruins. On a pulpit of wood, with the sad memorials of Judah's departed glory all around him, stood Ezra, probably now an aged man; for it was some years since he had left Babylon. On his right and left hand were thronged his brother Levites, who, voluntarily consecrated to the service of their God, lent a dignity and solemnity to the proceedings, reminding the populace of those days when they officiated in the Temple, and the glory of the Lord was visibly revealed. Below them, far as the eye could reach, the people had gathered themselves as one man, ardent and earnest to hear once more the words of the Most High God. Men and women indiscriminately blended, for the law appealed to *both*, and not then had the blighting words been whispered, that woman has no power to seek and know the Lord—that the study and comprehension of the law are for man, not her. We see her hastening, even as man, to listen to the words of her God—to accept with the whole fervor of her ardent heart, His covenant; and she is welcomed, not rebuked.

"And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people (for he was above them); and when he opened it, all the people stood up; and Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground." And then "the Levites caused the people to understand the law; and they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused the people to understand the reading." And when the people would have wept—for their own and their ancestors' sinful departure from the commands of the Lord stood before them more vividly,

more appalling, as they thus listened to the law—Nehemiah and Ezra forbade it, for they said, "The day was holy unto the Lord their God; mourn not, nor weep; but go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Solomon, rejoicing in consequence, followed this public reading of the law. The Feast of Tabernacles was proclaimed throughout all the cities of Judea, and observed with such solemnity and gladness as had not been since the days of Joshua the son of Nun, and in exact accordance with the written law of Moses, keeping the feast seven days, and on the eighth day a solemn assembly. A general fast, confession of sins, repentance, and prayer, with reading the law, and worshipping the Lord their God, soon after followed, the Levites rehearsing the many tokens of the Eternal's goodness, from the selection of Abraham unto the present time, and the awful wickedness of the people. Then followed the acceptance and sealing of the covenant by the men of Israel, their *wives*, sons, and *daughters*—the selection of the people—the rulers to dwell in Jerusalem—and of the rest of the people, one in ten to be chosen by lot to dwell in Jerusalem, and the other nine to dwell in other cities, and thus re-people the still beautiful, but mournfully desolate land. In the twelfth chapter, we find the selection of priests and officers for the service of the Temple, and the solemn dedication of the wall, "with gladness, and with thanksgiving, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps. Also on that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the *wives* and children rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off." Officers for the treasuries, offerings, firstfruits, tithes, singers, and porters, all were appointed, exactly in accordance with the law of Moses, and "the commandment of David, and of Solomon his son."

The mixed multitude was also separated from the children of Israel. Even Tobiah, the Ammonite, closely allied to Eliashib the priest, who had weakly allowed him, although an Ammonite, a chamber in the Temple, was cast forth with all his household stuff. No distinction of persons was made. All who had married strange wives, were they united even to the priest and highest officers, were, if they refused to separate from their unlawful connexions, scouted from the congregation of the Lord.

And thus, after a weary interval, faithfulness to the religion of Moses, and, in consequence, external and internal peace, seemed once more about to be the portion of Judea.

But let it not be imagined that this was either easily or satisfactorily accomplished; or that the noble exertions of Ezra and Nehemiah were productive of enjoyment, and, consequently, of earthly reward. So far from it, that if we read over the books of Ezra and Nehemiah attentively, we must be struck by the repeated mention of humiliation, fast, and prayer, with which their efforts were attended—the constant struggle, constant disappointment—the hope roused by a seeming response to their own ardent aspirations, and crushed again by revolt and disobedience. We find both Ezra and Nehemiah repeatedly taking on themselves the burden of their brethren's guilt, and beseeching pardon, as if themselves were the offenders. The prayer of Ezra, in the ninth chapter of the book bearing his name, and that of Nehemiah in his first chapter, are the most exquisite illustrations of pure patriotism that can be found in any history, and should bid our hearts glow with love and veneration towards men who so toiled and suffered for their country and their God. Profane History can give us no nobler and purer patriots than Ezra and Nehemiah. They may tell of warlike deeds and glorious heroism; but it is a nobler heroism, a more exalted valor, which can struggle on to free their countrymen from self-inflicted slavery—from those shackles of the *spirit*, which are far more difficult to remove than the shackles of a tyrant. Ezra and Nehemiah had to work not only against the enslaver, but also against the enslaved, for men's evil passions and rebellious wills were the tyrants who held them chained, and these were to be subdued ere freedom could be achieved, and Judea liberated from the thraldom of her children's sins. Modern patriots in general reap the full reward of their exciting enterprise in national prosperity and individual glory. The deaths of Ezra and Nehemiah are not specified; but their books reveal enough to convince us that they toiled unto the end—that personal aggrandizement, earthly distinctions, entered not their thoughts. They had indeed done much; but their lives probably closed ere half their patriotic wishes were accomplished, or their ceaseless exertions crowned with visible success.

And so it must be with all those who embark heart and soul

in the glorious service of a people's good. There must be darkness and despondency but too often, even in the noble mind, which has cast behind it all thought of selfish enjoyment, who pines, seeks, aspires after but one glorious goal, the improvement, religious and intellectual, of his species. There must be sadness, there must be disappointment, for such minds look far beyond, into space and time, and hope to compass the advancement of an *age* in the brief period of one human life. They feel, they know what should be; they thirst, they struggle after its attainment with a giant's strength, forgetful that in the individual minds of the vast mass of their fellows, there may be but one little grain of the immortal, the intellectual, which is so restlessly working in themselves; and, therefore, that time only can behold the reception and acknowledgment of those important Ends and Truths, which they so vividly behold.

Those, then, who would serve their fellows, must be armed with patience, with perseverance, which will bid them work on, in the very face of disappointment, and an utter want of sympathy; with hope that will carry them on her angel wings, above the ruggedness and toil of mere earthly labor; with faith that will look into the future, to behold there the fruition of those seeds which they have perhaps even unconsciously sown.

Would we, then, in truth, labor in the cause of God, by endeavoring to benefit our fellows, we must utterly annihilate the vain presumptuous dream that we shall behold our own work, and thus reap a reward which has never yet been found on earth. Why do we see so many turn their shoulders from the wheel at the very moment when they should persevere? Why do we see the best and noblest exertions often checked in their first vigor, and never resumed? Why do we hear so many, whose words had once been so eloquent with hope of good, in a few brief years speak but of the prevalence of evil, the impossibility of achieving aught of lasting worth? Why? because they look to *present reward*—they expect to see the matured *fruit* before even the *seed* could have taken root; they provided not against disappointment; they studied not the rugged nature of man; they look not back into the past, and, comparing it with the present, mark *what was* and *what is*—and note the long years which intervened before improvements which we now feel so common, that they are no longer improvements, could be accepted and acknowledged. They forget that

almost every national benefit conferred on man was in its first projection deemed a very madness, and more than one of its hapless originators persecuted unto death. Yet the seeds such supposed maniacs planted *never withered;* they lay in often uncongenial soil, proving their existence, and passing from one mind into another, perchance only by a breath, which bore them unconscious of its burden, till in the proper time they burst into full blossom, were cherished, fostered, for men had advanced while that little seed lay in abeyance, and then ripened into fadeless fruit.

Irrelevant as these remarks may appear to our subject, yet a little consideration will prove their application.

In Judaism, as in everything else, the present is an age of advancement—of improvement. The law, indeed, which God gave, remains pure, perfect, eternal as Himself, needing naught from man; but it is in the *observance* of that law, its *spiritual observance*, in which we remark *progression*, and hail it with glowing thankfulness, as seed, which, when ripened into fruit, will lead us once more to our own Holy Land, and to the restored favor of our God. But we are no enthusiasts to believe this will be either in our own time, or in that of some generations down. We do not suppose, because there is a stir in our ranks,—an aspiration after holiness,—a struggle with deep-rooted prejudices,—a desire to become purer, more spiritual, more enlightened,—that we shall look upon the *fruit* of such holy seed,—that twenty, fifty, aye, even a hundred years will complete the full perfection of the glorious End for which we aspire now. No! And we would conjure and beseech our brethren, in whose hearts lieth the ardent desire to accomplish national and individual good, to think with us—to despond not, if they behold nothing which would reveal that the holy seed has taken root, but much to make them tremble that it has faded into air. Let them but cease to hope to reap what they sow—let them but look far into Space and Time, and rest content that their labors will then bring forth fruit—only let them nerve themselves to work, without the faintest dream of earthly recompense or visible success, and labor on. They "will have cast their bread upon the waters, and they will find it after many days."

It is not, however, only in a generally national view that we have taken this rapid sketch of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

They are particularly important to us as women of Israel, burdened as we are with the charge, that Judaism degrades and enslaves us. By the especial mention of *wives* and *women* in every ceremony and covenant with which Ezra and Nehemiah again organized the people, it is very evident that no written or even traditional law then existed to our disparagement. Neither had captivity, and a residence with a heathen people, altered the national equality of the sexes, which in every religious ordinance the Jewish law commanded. This is a very important truth; as the period of Ezra is many years removed from the direct interference of the Almighty with His people: and in such a time of confusion and departure from the pure law, had there been any traditional statute which could have allowed the degradation of the weaker sex, we should find it acting against them in full force. Had the women of Israel been unaccustomed to join in religious exercises, or to feel themselves of no importance in the congregation of the Lord, it is not likely, that, after so long an interval of captivity, when the national ceremonies were compelled to be suspended, we should find them so eagerly flocking to listen to the reading of the law, bringing their children with them to join in the confession and humiliation for national sin, and to enter, heart and soul, into a covenant to walk in the law of Moses. They had no doubt seen enough, in their captivity, of the women of other countries, to feel more gratefully than ever, their own superiority in station, intellect, and responsibility. Eagerly and joyfully then they resumed obedience to that law, which guided and protected them with such mild and gentle guardianship, lifting up their hearts to a Father in heaven, who so watched over and tended them, and compelled man to assign them that station of equality and respectful tenderness, which, without such law, would, if we judge of the manners and customs of other and contemporary nations, have inevitably been refused them.

With this important fact, then, we close our present Period, and with it the records of our female ancestors, which are found in the Bible. Our succeeding parts will contain notices of those exalted Hebrew females mentioned in Josephus—a brief review of Israel as she was after the erection of the second temple—and the effects of war, dispersion, and persecution, upon her now. We shall find, even there, enough to confirm us in the position we have advanced; but even had we not—even if the records

of more modern Judaism presented nothing but a dark and awful picture of social and individual degradation—even if laws were promulgated by erring man, depriving us of our long-granted privileges, and debasing us in the scale of creation much below our brother man—still it would prove nothing but the fearful effects of superstition and intolerance on the human mind. It could not do away with the law which God Himself had given. It dare not term itself divine, if it contradict one item of that which the Bible holds up before us, alike in the precepts given by the voice of God, and in the history of His female children; and, therefore, as in not one precept, in not one mention of woman in the Word of God, can be discovered one evidence of her social or individual abasement, so must not only the Israelite, but his opponents be convinced, that the woman of Israel needs no other law, no other faith but her own, to convince her of her immortal destiny and her earthly duties—to guard the hallowed circle of her home—or raise her, as an individual, to perfect equality with man.

SIXTH PERIOD.

CHAPTER I.

REVIEW OF THE JEWISH NATION, FROM THE RETURN FROM BABYLON, TO THE APPEAL OF HYRCANUS AND ARISTOBULUS TO POMPEY.

We are now to commence a period in the History of the Women of Israel, completely and even painfully distinct from any which has gone before it. Indeed, so complicated, so amalgamated with the histories of other nations, so little purely national is Israel, and so few and far between are the notices of women, in the history of the nation, from the death of Nehemiah to the dispersion,—that there is very, very little which we can claim our own, or from which we can glean the consolation and lessons for individual social guidance, which are presented in the word of God. So little is there, in fact, of woman, that we may be censured for dwelling so long on a period which has so little to do with a work entitled "The Women of Israel," as almost to contradict its name. Yet where there are so very few works relative to our history in the vernacular idiom, and still fewer in which the Hebrew himself comes forward, with an attempt to fill up the void in national literature, and give the youth of his nation some assistance, distinct from the peculiar tenets which must pervade the writings of the most liberal of other creeds; *we* trust, that to linger a little while on our general history and thus explain away some of the errors and prejudices which have unconsciously gathered round us from *unanswered* accusations, may not be considered unnecessary, or even irrelevant to the subject on which we professed to treat.

Where there is no allusion *to* the Women of Israel of the *past*, let it be remembered that we are writing *for* the Women of Israel of the *present;* and, therefore, that we do not depart from the profession of our title. To the men of Israel—the

works of our own ancient writers, are, or ought to be, open; and they, therefore, cannot need the feeble effort of a female pen: but woman does. She has neither the time nor privilege, nor, in fact, the capability of seeking and penetrating into the vast tomes of stupendous learning, the complicated and allegorical questions and replies, narratives and histories, contained in the works of our venerable teachers; but is she on that account to remain entirely ignorant of the history of her people, in which, whether in prosperity or adversity, in patriotism or persecution, she has ever borne a distinguished part? How is she ever to realize that spirit of nationality and holiness which should be so peculiarly her own, if she knows little of her national history, save from Gentile writers? How know what is demanded of her *now*, if she does not sometimes ponder on the *past*, remembering, while she shudders at the awful sufferings of her people, that what *has been*, *may again be*. And is she endowed with the same noble spirit which guided her hapless ancestors? Has she the same deep love of her God, and His religion, which will keep her faithful in the midst of the horrors of persecution, or amidst the yet more dangerous ordeal of prosperity and peace? How is she to know this, if she looks upon herself only as the child of the soil which has given her a home, and all its attendant blessings? How is she to feel this, if she looks on the history of her people as far too antiquated to concern her now, and lends but too ready an ear to the false tale, that ancient and modern Judaism are totally distinct. How is she to reject prejudice, and to separate the true from the false, if all her information concerning the history of her people be derived from Gentile writers? It is expecting far too much from human nature to believe that we can *feel as Jews*, only because we are *born such*. More particularly women, who seeing so little different in the daily routine of their domestic lives from those around them, may be liable entirely to overlook their nationality, and imagine that a formal adherence to peculiar forms and ceremonies is sufficient for them; and, in consequence, know much less of their own history, teeming, as it does, with so much to interest and appal, than that of the country in which they dwell.

The scarcity of Jewish works by Jewish writers, is the real cause of this much regretted evil. We have histories without number, and suited to every age, and every taste, of other countries; but where shall we find one of the Jews which we

can safely put into the hands of our children and youth?* The love of England, of France, of America, is imbibed with their growth, because they know and delight in every event of these their adopted countries; and they would feel the same towards their own land, could they learn as much concerning it.

To provide for this want cannot be accomplished in a work like the present. The writer has only mentioned these things to explain, why, instead of concluding where the biographies of the "Women of Israel" may appear to conclude, noticing only the few female characters which may be casually mentioned, from the erection of the Second Temple to the Dispersion, she prefers taking a rapid, but connected, survey of the history of her people during that period. Where notices of individuals are scarce, we must endeavor to defend our position from generalities. Analogies may be drawn from the histories of states as well as from the biographies of individuals; and, as we proceed, we shall find that much which may appear from a mere superficial glance irrelevant to the *Women* of Israel *individually*, will yet so bear upon them *socially*, that our assertion of their non-degradation, their equality and elevation in the Jewish law, and in Jewish history, will be strongly and unanswerably confirmed.

The return of the Jews from Babylon did not restore that nationality and exclusiveness which Ezra and Nehemiah hoped, and for which they labored. With the Babylonish captivity, had in truth ended the history of Judea as a distinct nation. The very division of the tribes appears to have been lost; and instead of the patriarchal territories of Reuben, Simeon, Ephraim, &c., we only read of Samaria, Galilee, Perea, Idumea, and of Judea, as signifying a very trifling portion of what had once been comprised under that name. But two tribes returned from captivity, and for them the province termed Judea might have been sufficient; but how changed must they have felt was the aspect of their once beautiful land—how vainly have yearned to behold their brethren occupying the territories which had been assigned them by God himself; and thronging to His one Temple in the feasts He had appointed? Not only were strangers and aliens within

* Milman's is an exception. What we want, are those histories which we can put into young persons' hands; so written that they are read for pleasure, not as tasks.

their land, but ten tribes were lost, and they themselves, though nominally free, in reality still under the yoke of the Persian kings. Nor was Palestine any longer the *only* residence of the children of God. Communities were forming in many parts of the world, particularly in the many territories of Persia and in Egypt; and thus, though outwardly bound by the same religion, inwardly, interests could not fail to be divided, according to the position which they occupied in connexion with foreign courts.

Of the constant rebellions against their Heavenly King, by the recurrence of idolatry, and those awful practices mentioned in the previous periods of their history, we no longer hear; but in their place we find assimilation and intimate connexion with the manners and customs of other nations. In fact, so intimately blended with the histories of Persia, Macedon, Syria, Egypt, Parthia, and, finally, Rome, is the history of Judea from the Babylonish captivity to the War, that it is scarcely possible to divide them, or find any national incidents of sufficient note as to enable us to dwell upon them as we have hitherto done. The Eternal had veiled His face from them. Even in their return, we find no evidence that He had restored them the light of His presence, and acknowledged them once more as a distinct and holy nation—governed by Himself. The very religion, therefore, appears to have taken a different aspect—the High Priest was still nominally the head of the nation—the ceremonials of the law rigidly and perseveringly observed—but its beautiful spirit of love, which had entered into every household, blessing and guiding every domestic relation, appears to have been entirely lost, from the national assimilation with other countries. That there were still families in whom this blessed spirit existed, true and faithful to every spiritual as well as outward ordinance, cannot be doubted; but in the darkness enveloping this part of our history, we can only trace the general departure of nationality, and prevalence of public evil, which so repeatedly exposed us to misery and wrath. Before the Babylonish captivity, even the periods of most awful iniquity were illumined by rays from God Himself, in the holy men who, inspired by Him, stood up to threaten and console. We were not left entirely to our own hearts—to sin, unrebuked; but on our return from Babylon, this might no longer be—we *had indeed power* to *subdue sin* and *become holy*, fitted once again to

occupy the promised land, and in the face of the whole earth stand forth the chosen people of the Lord; but this conquest was to be achieved by individual and national efforts. The Eternal had instructed us in those things, the observance of which would regain His favor. He left us to pursue our own paths.

During the wars of Alexander of Macedon, and the contests of his successors, Judea repeatedly changed masters—and we therefore perceive how little she can be considered as an independent state. So few claims had she to nationality, that we repeatedly read of the Hebrews joining voluntarily the ranks of their several masters—serving as faithful soldiers to the Greek or Egyptian, and, in consequence, imbibing interests and feelings totally distinct from the Hebrew warriors of the olden time. These soldiers seldom or never returned to their own land, but swelled the Jewish colonies of other states; and, therefore, long before the general dispersion, we perceive the prophesy of Moses already in partial fulfilment—proving at once the utter fallacy of the argument entertained by some Gentiles, that the return from the Babylonish captivity is the fulfilment of those glorious and consoling promises contained in all the Prophets—and comforting us by the conviction, that these things are yet to be.

At length, however, the national spirit was aroused; and for a brief interval independence was secured. The awful cruelties of Antiochus Epiphanes, the universal suffering of the whole Jewish people, not only from bodily torment, but from the prohibition of their sacred law (which, of course, on the instant became more dear), the desecration of their holy Temple—evils so terrible could no longer be endured; and under the heroic Maccabeean brothers, the Jews threw off the yoke of slavery. It was a noble epoch in our history, as full of chivalric daring, of the purest patriotism, of the most heroic perseverance, as can be found in the pages of any history, ancient or modern. They fought for no personal aggrandizement—for no increase of territory—no dominion over their fellows—but simply to purify their land from the abominations which had desecrated its holy soil—to re-establish the religion of their God, and obtain the freedom of their persecuted brethren.

And all this they did. The plan of our present work forbids our lingering on this glorious epoch, and we are compelled to

pass it by as briefly and unsatisfactorily as all our other historic notices; but what Hebrew of either sex can read this period of Jewish history, even in the narration of Gentile writers, without such emotions stirring within him as instinctively betray his near connexion with the heroic spirits of whom he reads! Have we not patriots and heroes, on whom to dwell with that glowing admiration, so thrilling and so beneficial to our aspiring youth? —and shall we only associate our ideas of the Jewish nation with what she *is*, never casting a thought on what she *was?*

The independence wrought by the Asmonæans, or Maccabees, permitted Judea, for a brief interval, to take her position in the world as a sovereignty governed by her own kings. The gratitude of the people naturally led to the bestowal of the royal dignity on the family of their deliverers. Simon was the only one of the brothers remaining; and, in a general assembly held at Jerusalem, the people made both the High Priesthood and the office of Regent, or Prince of the Jews, hereditary in his family.

Aristobulus the First, the grandson of Simon, was the first who assumed the title of King, his father, John Hyrcanus, and his grandfather, Simon, having been satisfied with their dignity of High Priest, and being acknowledged by foreign potentates and their own people, as Princes of the Jews. The real dignity lasted but a very brief interval; and those who possessed it, instead of strengthening and nationalizing their *home* dominions, endeavoring to restore that ancient and exclusive kingdom which had once characterized Judea, were continually making alliances with the Romans, and other states; becoming, as it were, so blended with them, that it is difficult to regard Judea, even in her well-earned independence, as the holy and peculiar nation which she had been, and was, in fact, commanded still to be. We find it difficult to recognise her as the same nation which had before occupied the land. Her frequent missions to other countries, her alliances and foreign friendships, could not fail to decrease her nationality, by the constant efflux of Jews to distant lands, where it was scarcely possible for them to adhere to their religion, and the repeated and invited admission of strangers within Judea. We can no longer recognise the High Priest of Moses' ordination, who was to bear on his breast and brow the solemn symbol of his inauguration; who was to minister in the holy of holies, till he seemed, in the eyes of the people, to stand on the very threshold of

heaven, and receive direct communications from the Most High. We cannot recognise this peaceful and sacred minister in the high priesthood of any who, after the Babylonish captivity, bore that solemn name. The service of the Temple could have been but secondary in the multitudinous affairs, foreign and domestic, which crowded round the Prince or sovereign of Judea. In the law of Moses, the offices were not to be united; because, in the first place, the tribe of Levi were devoted as the elected priests or servants of the Temple; and from them, therefore, no king could have been chosen. In the second, engaged, as a sovereign must be, in unavoidable wars, and other temporal concerns, Moses knew that it was impossible for him to devote himself to spiritual things, as the office of High Priest demanded; and in the third, no king, who, as the leader of armies, must have been a shedder of human blood, could ever have been sufficiently pure to have attended at the altar of the Most Holy. David was not even permitted to build a "House for the Lord;" how much less, then, could he have officiated as High Priest!

In the later kings, one prevention to their obtaining that solemn office, was evaded. They were descended from the priestly line of Joiarib; but that very circumstance proves how completely at an end was the division of land and service, which had formerly characterized Judea and her sons. We are told repeatedly, "unto the tribe of Levi Moses gave not any inheritance; the Lord God was their inheritance, as he said unto them." How then, if the division of the tribes had continued in force, could the office of high priest and king have been united? How could a king's inheritance be the house of the Lord God alone, as it could and ought to be the priest's? We are particular on this point, because it is often asserted, and by some believed, that the temporary independence of Judea as a sovereignty fulfilled the prophecies; whereas the very fact of the royal family descending from Levi, not from *Judah*, and the complete amalgamation of the tribes, so that their division was impossible, is a sufficient evidence in itself, that the prophecies contained most forcibly in Ezekiel xxxvii. from verse 15 to the end, and in the whole of the forty-eighth chapter, were not in any one single point fulfilled by our return from Babylon; and, therefore, must allude to a period centuries more distant from the term of the Prophet's life.

Simon, John Hyrcanus, Aristobulus the First, and Alexander Jannæus, resigned successively, uniting, as had been established by the people, the priesthood, with the royal purple. Alexander Jannæus left the crown to his wife Alexandra, and, in consequence, the high priesthood was severed from the crown, and given to Hyrcanus her eldest son. Had he succeeded his mother, as was anticipated, the offices would have probably been quietly re-united. But the daring and aspiring spirit of his younger brother, Aristobulus, by causing internal dissension, gave the first fatal blow to the tottering independence (so called) of Judea. On the death of Alexander, Hyrcanus was, indeed, nominated king, and the children of Aristobulus retained as hostages for their father's conduct; but a single battle between the brothers decided the point. Hyrcanus consented to retire to private life; and Aristobulus was acknowledged king. The high priesthood is not mentioned; and from the continued enmity manifested towards Aristobulus by the Pharisees, who were mostly priests and teachers, it almost appears as if he could not have occupied that station. Even had he been publicly acknowledged high priest, the office must have been merely nominal; for his constant foreign and civil wars would have allowed him but little time or inclination for attention to an office demanding such individual purity and domestic peace.

The independence of Judea (if indeed it can be so called), reckoning from the election of Simon, in 14 B.C. to the appeal of the brothers to Pompey, the great Roman general, in 63 B.C., had lasted eighty years—a period fraught with foreign war and civil dissension, cruelties and miseries; resembling indeed the histories of the nations around them, but utterly incompatible with the pure law which had guided Judah before the captivity.

We read of Aristobulus the First shutting up his mother in prison, and starving her to death, because his father having left the crown to her, she naturally refused to relinquish her authority, and this man was termed a high priest of a people whose beautiful law had commanded that even disrespect to a mother should be punished with death! We read of brothers arming against brothers, the most influential imprisoning and even murdering the others—of Jews rising against Jews, or compelled to fight against each other, by joining oppos-

ing armies, and adopting the interests of different states. We search in vain for that beautiful spirit which, had the law been obeyed, would have quieted and hallowed the people. We glance over these sickening horrors, and ask, are these records of a people to whom God himself spake in thunder from Mount Sinai, and deigned to give a law which all had the power to obey, and which if obeyed, would have brought down the days of heaven upon earth? Can we marvel as we read the appalling history of the Jews, from their return from Babylon to the last war, at the awful punishments and miseries which have been their portion in every quarter of the globe? And yet, while other nations have passed away for ever, leaving not a trace, we still remain as witnesses of the awful effects of human sin; and more thrilling still, of that changeless truth which had said we should be a people before Him FOR EVER, and therefore we exist;—of that unfathomable mercy, which holds out promises of pardon, restoration, love, and therefore we may hope and pray, and cling to Him as our Rock of Refuge still.

Of our domestic history as a people during these eighty years, we can glean little, except that at the very time the law was so appallingly disobeyed and disregarded—there had arisen men, stern and exclusive adherents of both written and traditional laws. At the very time that in some points all nationality appeared entirely lost, and Judea only sought for temporal dominions, which might be secured and widened by hostile wars or peaceful alliances with other potentates, a spirit of exclusiveness, of rigid observance of some portions of the law had, as in direct contradiction, chained one body of Jews. We are told that "the law, which of old was perpetually violated, or almost forgotten, was now enforced by general consent, to its extreme point or even beyond it. Prone before on every occasion to adopt the idolatrous practices of their neighbors, they now secluded themselves from the rest of the world, in proud assurance of their own religious superiority—their city, their native soil, their religion, became the objects of the most passionate attachment; the observance of the Sabbath, and even of the sabbatical year, was enforced with rigor. In short, from this period (the return from captivity) commences that unsocial spirit—that hatred towards mankind—that want

of humanity to all but their own kindred, with which they have been branded by all the Roman writers."*

This, though an eloquent passage, scarcely appears to have sufficient foundation, as actuating the *whole nation.* How could the whole law be rigidly enforced when we see Aristobulus the First acting as we have noticed? How could the laws, alluding to the extreme purity and sanctity of the high priest, have been obeyed, when that office was so often filled by a warrior? How could they be said to keep themselves secluded as a nation, when we see so many thousands fighting under the banner of foreign kings, and accepting offices and dignities at their hands? How could they demonstrate hatred to all mankind when foreign alliances were so often made? And we shall find Herod sending his own sons to Rome for their education, and forming intimate friendships with Antony and other noble Romans. How could the manners and customs of their land and religion be said to claim their most passionate attachment, when we see kings and people so often sedulously cultivating the manners, arts, games, and vices, first of Greece and then of Rome?

As a people and a nation, whatever they might have *professed*, they *acted* contrary to the law of God, in plunging deeper and deeper into the dark abyss from which no arm either heavenly or earthly could be stretched forth to save them. To a certain body of the nation, the passage we have quoted may be applicable; and it is to them we allude, as in the midst of national anarchy and disobedience, even in the midst of their own too often mistaken zeal, the preservers of the religion and the law.

To obtain a just and impartial estimate of the real character, intentions, and bearings of this body, known as the Pharisees, is to the Hebrew of the present day almost impossible. The Jew, whose mind and heart have been guided by his Talmudical studies, cannot fail to regard them with the deepest veneration and love;—the Jew, who has known them only through the medium of Gentile writers, must unconsciously imbibe a portion of their feeling, and perhaps regard them only as superstitious zealots, following the letter of the law, but not its spirit. The

* Milman.

allusions to the Pharisees, in the book which Gentiles believe divine, and the subsequent explanations in their various commentaries, cannot fail to engender this spirit. But the Hebrew should guard against imbibing it, because the view is false in many of its bearings. It is very difficult, when we only possess histories written by Gentiles in a liberal and friendly spirit, and containing so much with which we can fully sympathize, to realize that on some points as Hebrews, our opinions must form themselves, and not be guided by those of the historian. The Pharisees is one of these—on which we must reflect and exercise our own judgment. The Rabbinical historian would unhesitatingly pronounce them saints, as little less holy or inspired than the prophets themselves;—the Gentiles, as cruel, prejudiced bigots, hiding the most fearful vices under the mask of extremest sanctity. Both are probably wrong. The Pharisees were but men, liable to all the failings of humanity; but their religion, even if carried beyond the law, was honest and sincere. The laxity and indifference of the multitude compelled a greater degree of strictness; they were forced to raise around them a wall of exclusiveness, lest they too should fall. They beheld the awful evils creeping steadily amidst all ranks, and was it strange that they should have encouraged an unsocial spirit, and held themselves aloof? They beheld foreign manners and customs destroying the nationality of their people and land; that the law of their God, which they justly held supreme, was disregarded; and was it unnatural that they should seclude themselves, proud of their spiritual superiority—or that their attachment to their land and Temple should increase in passionate intensity, as they beheld it so often trampled upon and desecrated by foreigners? That a want of charity, of humility, of forbearance, marked their religion, might be; nay, in that terrible period it could scarcely be otherwise. Party spirit even then had dried up the channels of social affection, and the spirit of love and meekness which the religion of Moses taught, could not be realized in the popular tumults and crimes for ever raging round them. Individuals there were, no doubt, combining the pure spirit and loving mind with the outward ceremonial; but in this brief sketch we can only generalize. Still, spite of their faults—spite of the too rigid, too exclusive notions, which, if indeed they had existence, originated simply from the fear of being too lax, and

sharing the indifference and infidelity of too many of their fellows, the Pharisees must be regarded with veneration as the preservers of the law.

Now should the Zaddikim, or *righteous*, be passed unnoticed. Of these men we shall find no notice in the Talmudical writers, because they were opposed to much which that party considered of equal sanctity and obligation with the written law of God. But in an historical sketch, which, to be correct and useful, must be perfectly impartial, untinged by any individual feeling, we cannot refrain from noticing them, and in a very different spirit to the abhorrence with which they are generally regarded. However mistaken might have been some of their notions, however impossible to follow the law of the Eternal, without some regard to the useful practical explanations of the Elders; still that they were as sincere and zealous as their opponents, cannot be doubted. These differing views aided materially in the preservation of the law, although the dissensions appeared to, and in fact did, increase the internal miseries and quarrels of Judea.

Given up as they were to their own imaginations, their divine nature—apparently utterly lost in the dominion of evil passions—we seem to read but of anarchy and sin, more fearful than any which had come before, and increasing to a climax which *compelled* the chastisement so long deferred. But if with a faithful heart and unshrinking eye, we look *within* this rolling tumult—if we look *beneath* the stormy waves of dissension and hate and wrath—we trace in the very elements that increased our miseries, those of our final preservation. We behold but the workers of evil, for wickedness ever comes uppermost; but the faithful hearts, the enduring martyrs, the good, the true, are invisible in history, as in daily life, even as the still calm depths of the ocean, whose waves are in tumult and in storm. Never was the divinity of virtue entirely extinct, either in man or nations; and we may rest content and satisfied, that even in the midst of the blackened annals on which our eyes must rest, there was virtue and spirituality, and truth, sincerity, and zeal; and that there will be these to the end of time—invisible in history, invisible in life, but working on silently and unceasingly, even to themselves, towards the purity, and elevation, and preservation of the religion of the Lord. Nor are such workers confined to one party or one

creed. Outwardly, each will condemn each; but inwardly, they work together.

CHAPTER II.

FROM THE APPEAL TO POMPEY TO THE DEATH OF HEROD.

HYRCANUS's quiet surrender of his authority was not of long continuance. Urged on by Antipater, the father of Herod, he again took the field; and after various alternations of success and defeat, both brothers appealed to Pompey, the Roman general;—first by commissioners, and then, by command, in person.

Each produced defenders; but many of the nation came to protest against both, as having illegally changed the form of government from the supremacy of the High Priest to that of king; a charge sufficient to confirm our idea that, from the death of Alexander, the former office had completely merged in the latter. The representatives of neither party, however, had much weight. Pompey decided as was best for his own and the Roman interest, only so far favoring Hyrcanus, as to tempt Aristobulus to resume hostilities; convinced that so doing would only prove his weakness, make him prisoner to Pompey, and eventually cause the whole nation to submit; and his prognostics were correct, with the sole exception of a remnant of Aristobulus's faction, who threw themselves into the Temple, valiantly resolved to defend it to the last.

After three months' struggle, during which the cessation of warfare on the Sabbath had given the Romans their only advantage, the Temple was taken, and twelve hundred of the Jews slain. Amongst them were several priests, who, engaged in sacrifices and other services of the Temple at the moment of the assault, never moved from the altar, nor faltered in the performance of a single rite, but fell murdered where

they stood firm and undaunted, and truly warriors of the Lord.

The faction of Hyrcanus were amongst the most furious in the massacre of their countrymen, painfully proving the fearful effects of party spirit, and how completely nationality must at this period have been lost. Hyrcanus was nominated High Priest and Prince of the country, on condition of his submitting to the Roman government, paying tribute, making no effort to increase his territories, and never to resume the crown. The dignity was thus merely nominal, the independence of the country at an end, and Judea little more than a province of Rome.

Aristobulus and his children, his sons, and two daughters, were carried captives to Rome. Alexander, one of these sons (and afterwards the father of Mariamne and Aristobulus), escaped on the journey to Rome, and returned to Judea.

The desecration of the Temple by Pompey, in profaning its most sacred precincts, excited towards him the utmost hatred of the Jews—a hatred which caused them to behold his gradual decline with satisfaction, and wherever they were scattered, they simultaneously swelled the ranks of his rival Julius Cæsar.

From this period, in all the internal troubles of Judea, we read of her appealing to the Romans for assistance; the never-failing method of kingdoms being entirely subjected by the party to whom they appeal. Hyrcanus did not enjoy his authority in peace—Alexander, the elder son of Aristobulus, above alluded to, raised a considerable force, and made every preparation for re-obtaining the possessions of his father. Gabinius, pro-consul of Syria, called in by Hyrcanus, made head against him, and compelled him to surrender his fortresses. Aristobulus himself, and his younger son, soon after escaped from Rome, and headed another revolt against Hyrcanus, but with worse fortune; the former, severely wounded, was sent back in chains to Rome—Antigonus, through the intercession of his mother, obtained his release.

The form of government was then altered by Gabinius, proving the very small portion of dignity or independence which the nominal prince retained. Hyrcanus had had nothing to do with the revolts; but we find him deprived entirely of the royal authority—and five senates, or sanhedrins, established at Jeru-

salem, Jericho, Gadara, Amatheus, and Sepphoris. This government continued till ten years afterwards, when Cæsar restored Hyrcanus to his former power.

Though his arms were defeated, the spirit of Alexander, in whom all the courage, enterprise, and chivalry of the Asmonæans appeared to have centred, was still unsubdued. The moment Gabinius had drawn off his forces, intent on the conquest of Egypt, Alexander reappeared, drove the few remaining Romans into a strong position on Mount Gerizim, and there besieged them—courageously met Gabinius, who had returned on hearing of the revolt, valiantly gave him battle at the head of 80,000 men, and, though again defeated by the irresistible Roman arms, and compelled to take flight, bore with him his unconquered spirit still.

Both he and his father, however, fell victims to the Roman civil war. Cæsar had given Aristobulus his freedom, and commanded him to create a diversion in Palestine in his favor. The adherents of Pompey poisoned the unfortunate prince on his journey. Alexander, who was levying soldiers in Judea for the assistance of Cæsar, was seized at Antioch by Scipio, the friend of Pompey, and beheaded. Antigonus was, therefore, the only scion of the family of Aristobulus remaining. Hyrcanus retained the sovereignty in name, Antipater in power. Winning the favor of Cæsar in his Egyptian wars, Antipater, while he demanded and received the re-establishment of the High Priesthood for Hyrcanus, obtained for himself all the rights of a Roman citizen, and the procuratorship of the whole of Judea. Soon after, presuming still more on the incapacity of the feeble prince whom he pretended to befriend, and on the friendship of the Romans, he made his eldest son, Phasael, governor of Jerusalem, and his younger, Herod, governor of Judea. This is the first mention of a character so intimately blended with the fortunes of the Jewish people. The brevity of our present sketch will not permit us even to attempt a delineation of the shrewd and sagacious policy, and unfailing enterprise, with which this extraordinary man made his way through the most adverse factions, both Jewish and Roman, to the supremacy of Judea, and to the intimate friendship of all the contending heads of Rome. Julius Cæsar, Mark Antony, Lepidus, and, finally, Augustus Cæsar—men whose views were never the same, were yet brought over by Herod's indomitable will, to befriend and

exalt him. Much of his public, and almost all his private history, will be found in the memoir of Mariamne; and, therefore, needs no mention here. We will merely touch on those points important in a national view. Antigonus, the sole surviving son of Aristobulus, still struggled for the crown. He obtained the succor of the Parthians, who overran Syria and Asia Minor, while he himself, with a large native force, entered Jerusalem and took possession of the Temple; the Hyrcanians, under Herod and Phasael, holding the palace. The Jews had, at that season, assembled from all quarters to celebrate the feast of Pentecost, and so thronged the ranks of the contending factions. How little did this national assemblage fulfil the spirit of the beautiful law which had thus called them together! How appallingly they contradicted the spirit of the divine law and social unity; for the encouragement of both which this holy festival had been instituted! They celebrated the delivery of that holy Law which, in the very hour of its commemoration, they defiled!

The partial success of Antigonus in Jerusalem, through his Parthian allies, was more than balanced by the successful intrigues carried on by his rival Herod in Rome, to which city, after a multitude of adventures, he had safely escaped. His entreaty that the sovereignty of Judea might be conferred on the young son of Alexander gave the much coveted honor to himself; and, conducted to the Capitol by Antony and Octavius, he was there, in a *heathen city*, and with *idolatrous sacrifices*, anointed king over the holy people of a Most Holy God!* Will this fulfil the beautiful promises of the prophets? this prove the nationality of the Jewish people at that period? Alas! this was but the commencement of denationalization!

But though nominally king, and aided by the all-powerful Roman influence, Herod was not universally received as sovereign by the Jewish people until some years afterwards, when Antigonus, entirely defeated, surrendered at discretion; and, in spite of his cowardly entreaties for life, was, at Herod's solicitation, condemned by Antony, and by the axe of a common lictor received his death.

Herod was now, indeed, sovereign of Judea. Never, before the Babylonish captivity, had the crown of Judah thus passed

* Josephus; and Jahn's "History of the Hebrew Commonwealth."

into the family of an alien, who dared not assert himself of royal blood, and whose very birth as a Jew is doubtful. Josephus tells us that Antipater was indeed said, by Nicholas of Damascus, to be of the stock of the principal Jews, who came out of Babylon; but "that assertion of his was to gratify Herod, who was his son, and who came afterwards, by certain revolutions of fortune, to be King of the Jews." It is evident, from this passage, that Josephus himself doubts Herod's Jewish descent; and so must every one who reflects on his character and life. He thought of and pursued his own aggrandizement alone. The kingdom of Judea was no more to him than any other territory; it was no longer a *holy* land—no longer the land of promise under the direct guardianship of the Most High. Where have we found, since the return from Babylon, that divine interference which, in the worst and darkest periods of the kingdom before the captivity, had been so distinctly visible? Where do we ever read of the throne of Judea being obtained by aid of *foreign powers?* the holy kingdom allied with, or subordinate to, the heathen and idolator? The word of the Lord had passed, that the line of David (and consequently the tribe of Judah) was the line of kings appointed, and the only line recognisable by Him; and, therefore, every prophecy alluding to the restoration of the kingdom IS STILL TO BE FULFILLED. The very fate of the Asmonæans appears to evince the displeasure of the Eternal in their acceptance of the kingdom; for they were not of *His appointed race.* As deliverers from the heathen, as restorers of the Temple and the religion, they were accepted individually in His sight; but, from the very hour of their assumption of the royal dignity in the person of Aristobulus the First, only one who bore the Asmonæan name, Alexander Jannæus, died naturally in his bed. And not the guilty alone; the young and innocent—even those connected only by the mother's side with the Asmonæans, shared the same awful doom, which hemmed round, as by an impenetrable wall, the whole of that fated race.

Success the most brilliant crowned every foreign policy of Herod. His marvellous ability extricated him from every difficulty, and pushed forward his successes, till he became the terror of all the surrounding nations. The country was at peace, breathing, as it were, once again, from the dissensions and miseries which, till the accession of Herod, had deluged Judea

with her own blood. But, though thus prosperous and at peace, it was the peace and prosperity of any of the heathen nations, not of the land of the Lord.

Herod, a very doubtful Jew himself, felt that the strong and exclusive principles of nationality were adverse alike to foreign ambition or domestic greatness. The law of Moses undoubtedly circumscribed the regal power. Nor were foreign conquests admissible with the exclusiveness of the Hebrew people. To remove this barrier, and gradually prepare the minds of his subjects for foreign usages, Herod introduced all the Grecian and Roman games. A theatre was built within, and an amphitheatre without, the walls of Jerusalem. Chariot-racing, boxing, the drama, even the gladiators and wild beasts were there introduced. The people submitted, but with silent abhorrence; for such sanguinary exhibitions, as the two last mentioned, were completely contrary to the mild and loving spirit of Mosaic law.

Nor was this all. Building after building, all more or less associated with the Roman and Grecian, rose up at the bidding of Herod. His first magnificent enterprise was a superb palace on Mount Sion; his next was to rebuild and change into a strong fortress, the palace of Baris; to erect citadels at Gaba in Galilee, and at Heshbon in Peræa; and to rebuild Samaria on a scale of extraordinary magnificence, peopling it with his own soldiers, and the descendants of its former inhabitants. At a later period in his reign, he erected a sumptuous palace-fortress, in his usual style of architecture, on the spot where he had defeated Antigonus, seven miles from Jerusalem, round which a superb city speedily arose.

He spent twelve years in the erection and decoration of a maritime city, which he called Cæsarea, and almost entirely colonized with Greeks. It resembled in its sumptuous style of architecture, a city of gorgeous palaces. A great temple, dedicated to Augustus, occupied the centre, with two colossal statues, one of Rome and the other of Cæsar; and, of course, possessing the necessary appendages to a Grecian city, the theatre and amphitheatre, in which the usual heathen games were quinquennially performed.

Was it strange, then, as they beheld this increase of heathen temples with every newly erected city, that the Jews should forget the magnificence of their monarch, in the terrible thought

that, slowly but surely, he was carrying out his design of heathenizing their country and themselves? In some parts nationality was still awake, burning to throw off the yoke of one who had sunk them from their proud superiority as the Kingdom of God, to a level with the vassal-kings of Rome; but though their murmurs were loud and deep, though conspiracies were continually forming, Herod retained his power, continuing to support his double character of Jew and Roman to the last.

Hoping to ingratiate his people, and employ the disaffected, he determined to rebuild the Temple, which, from the lapse of 500 years, and its repeated sieges, had become, in some parts, dilapidated and ruinous. At first, the Jews feared that these professions did but conceal the intention of entirely destroying their solemn sanctuary; but the immense preparations before the work of demolition began, removed the apprehension; and with a delight and pride which, for the time, almost gave Herod favor in their sight, the nation beheld a beautiful fabric crowning Mount Moriah, with "masses of white marble, and pinnacles of gold." But at the very time he was thus occupied as a Jewish king, he retained his character of a Roman vassal, by presiding at the Olympic games, making such magnificent donations for their support that he was elected their perpetual president; and this man has been denominated the last independent sovereign of Judea—and the hapless people burdened with his idolatry and sins—as if he were one of them! Who that reflects upon his reign alone, can associate for one moment the blessed promises of the prophets with the kingdom of Judea between the return from captivity and their final dispersion?

The very sending his two sons to Rome for education, was a measure directly contrary to the law of Moses. Nor did it proceed only from his anxious desire to conciliate the Romans. Herod was seldom actuated by but *one* motive. Looking upon the sons of Mariamne as his successors, he probably hoped that their Roman education would effectually remove all national prejudices, and render them able assistants in his ardent desire to Romanize his subjects, and gradually do away with all those remnants of that ancient superstition which excluded them from the conquests and ambition of other nations. The Jews, as a nation, were never in greater danger of becoming amalgam-

ated with other countries, than in the reign of Herod; but still the God of their fathers watched over them, preserving them for the sake of His changeless word, as his chosen people still; interfering, not visibly, indeed, because of their awful crimes, but making even their threatening chastisement the means of their preservation.

The law issued by Herod, decreeing that thieves should be sold into slavery out of the country, is another manifestation of his anxiety to adopt every measure for the denationalizing of Judea; and from its direct disobedience to the law of Moses, was so obnoxious to the Jews, as to annul their rising gratitude for the rebuilding of the Temple. Nor was his last public act, the placing a large golden eagle over the great gate of the Temple, less offensive. It was torn down by two valiant youths, who were unhappily apprehended, and fell victims to his revenge. The horrible disease under which he labored increased his sanguinary propensities. Execution after execution followed, till scarcely a family was spared the agony of bereavement. His last barbarous order, that all the principal families of the nation should be seized, shut up in the Hippodrone, and murdered the instant of his own death, that he might insure a general mourning, was happily disregarded, and the victims spared.

And with such a command, died Herod, misnamed the Great, in the second year of the Christian era, and after a reign of thirty-four years as undisputed monarch.

He has been termed the last independent sovereign of Judea; but even in this brief survey, we have seen enough to convince us that the Jewish people were never further from national independence than in his reign; that though a strong party of the people still remained zealous and earnest in the national cause, yet the extreme laxity of the Mosaic code, the fearful innovations adopted from heathen and foreign customs, the close intimacy with the Greeks and Romans, must have presented fearful temptations to the people generally, and hastened that day of destruction and dispersion, which the eye of Omniscience saw, could alone preserve His holy law from annihilation, by its complete amalgamation with the surrounding nations.

CHAPTER III.

GENERAL SKETCH CONTINUED FROM THE DEATH OF HEROD TO THE WAR.

For nine years the throne of Judea was occupied by Archelaus, the son of Herod and his sixth wife, Malthæ, a Samaritan. Little of national interest occurred during that period except a constant reference to Rome (for the claims of Archelaus were disputed by his brother, Herod Antipas)—repeated insurrections of the Jewish people, and, in consequence, numberless executions —and the increasing power of the Romans within Judea, who overspread the country, and ruled with such despotic hand, as to cause innumerable adventurers to spring up, collecting daring bands around them, who, either as robbers or fanatics, increased the wretchedness of the people. Archelaus appears to have neither possessed nor exercised any kingly power. In fact, we can scarcely regard him either as a Hebrew or a Hebrew king. His marriage with Glaphyra, the widow of his brother Alexander, and the mother of children by him, was in direct disobedience to the law of Moses, and consequently very obnoxious to the people: and so completely were himself and his kingdom in the power of the Romans, that the emperor would not even allow him the title of king, recognising him simply as the Ethnarch of Judea. In the tenth year of his reign, he was suddenly summoned to Rome, and thence banished to Vienne in Gaul, and all his estates confiscated. From that hour, though one or other noble Hebrew was continually rising, with claims to the sovereignty, Judea sank into a Roman province, dependent on the prefecture of Syria, with a subordinate administration of its own in a Roman governor, generally of the equestrian rank— and recognised in history as Procurator of Judea.

Coponius, Marcus Ambivius, Valerius Gratus, and Pontius Pilate, successively enjoyed this office. During the reign of Caligula, we again read of the Jews being persecuted for their religion. That emperor, anxious to be universally acknowledged as a god, was furious that a nation of captives (for such the Jews

actually were) should dare to worship other than himself, and treated them with even more severity than any other of his subjects. In Rome, Syria, and Egypt, the nation felt the effects of the imperial tyranny; but its only effect was to draw them yet closer together, and increase the value of that sacred religion, which both foreign and native princes seemed so determined to undermine.

In Alexandria, their sufferings equalled the previous cruelties of Antiochus Epiphanes. The Roman Prefect of the period was Flaccus Aquilius, whose tyrannical oppressions even surpassed those of the Emperor himself. He was the first to deny the Jews their rights of citizenship; and this without the smallest provocation on their part. Two quarters of the city were occupied by Jews, though many were also scattered about the other parts. Without any given reason, they were ordered to remove into a district so small, that they were compelled to spread along the sea-shore, and take refuge even in the cemeteries.* Their homes were pillaged, the contents of their magazines and shops publicly divided; pestilential disorders, from the heat and famine of their cooped-up abodes, broke out most fearfully, and when rendered desperate by their condition, they left their assigned quarter—a general massacre ensued. The sword and club, fire, scourging, suffocation, all were employed against them. Neither man, woman, nor child escaped; and this continued, until, at length, the arrest of Flaccus, by order of the Emperor, put an end in a measure to these atrocities.

In Babylon also there were persecutions, whose origin our readers will find in the authorities so often quoted, Josephus and Milman. In Judea images were raised all over the country, and an edict issued to place the statue of Caligula in the Temple of Jerusalem. Once more the national spirit was aroused. Thousands of the Hebrews of either sex, and every rank and age, unarmed, and clad in sackcloth and ashes, traversed the land, solemnly protesting their intention to sacrifice their lives rather than consent to this awful profanation of their Temple. Petronius, an upright and humane man, sought to dissuade them from their resolution, urging the power of the Emperor, the submission of other nations, and the horrors of war.

* Will not this remind us of a modern persecution? Alas! the History of the Jews can scarcely ever be considered *Past*.

"We have no thoughts of war," was their unanimous reply: "but we will submit to be massacred rather than thus infringe our Law:" and they fell with their faces to the ground, boldly offering their throats to the sword.

The humanity of Petronius delayed the execution of the imperial mandate, on pretence of allowing time for the statue to be finished; but it was to a native prince, yet more than to Petronius, that the Israelites owed their security.

On the early and romantic history of Herod Agrippa, the son of Aristobulus and grandson of Mariamne, we cannot here be permitted to linger. He had been taken to Rome by his mother Berenice directly after his father's murder; and there, enjoying the favor and friendship of many noble Romans, had passed his youth. His varied fortunes might fill a volume. We can here only make such mention of him as is connected with this general sketch. Caligula had made him king of Gaulanitis, Batanea, and Trachonitis, and Tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa. The greater part of what had formerly been the Holy Land in consequence belonged to him; but Judea was still possessed by Rome.

Though educated in the Roman capital, and continually residing there, even after he was termed King of the Jews, Agrippa appears to have retained that strong feeling of nationality, and earnest love for his country and religion, so peculiar to the valiant founders of the Asmonæan race. On hearing of the disastrous alternative proposed to his countrymen in Judea—the desecration of their Temple or their entire destruction, he invited Caligula to a banquet, and treated him with such extraordinary splendor as to excite the astonishment of even that luxurious Sovereign, who, in the moment of enjoyment, desired him to ask a boon, which he swore to grant. The true Asmonæan blood flowed in the veins of the grandson of Mariamne. It was easy to have asked increase of dominion—of revenue—and thus have aggrandized himself; but not such was his request! He entreated the repeal of the fatal edict; and, after a struggle between wounded pride and his attachment to the petitioner, Caligula consented, and the decree was suspended.

The murder of Caligula followed. Agrippa alone paid him the last honors. He could forget the vices of the man in the attachment of the friend. The peaceful acknowledgment of Claudius as emperor was mainly attributable to this Jewish

prince, and Claudius did not forget the obligation. The investiture of all the domains of the great Herod was conferred on Agrippa; Judea and Samaria were once again united with Galilee, Peræa, and the provinces beyond Jordan—forming one independent kingdom, which a public edict proclaimed as a donation from the Emperor to Agrippa; between whom a treaty was formally concluded.

Once more, then, for the brief interval of three years, did the Hebrews breathe in religious and moral freedom. Once more the reins of government were held by a native prince, whose Asmonæan descent rendered him universally popular, save to some stern zealots, whose factious spirits were ever on the watch for turbulence and blood. Once more we seem to associate with a people following the Law of God, ruled by a prince whose most ardent desire appeared to follow the statutes of Moses with the utmost exactness! Daily sacrifices were offered, legal impurities strictly prohibited, taxes remitted, the religion and comfort of his people made his first object; while the munificence and splendor of his court, the sumptuous buildings he erected, surrounded him with all the pomp and power of an independent Sovereign. His brief reign, marked as it is with such meek and gentle authority in the Sovereign, such calm and peaceful nationality in the People, shines forth like a bright star amidst the troublous wars and stormy clouds of awful darkness which it followed and preceded. Its beams had power to disperse, for a brief interval, the dim shadows of the PAST; but the black wings of the FUTURE gathered round and shrouded up its mild light in such awful darkness that we almost forget it ever shone.

The death of Agrippa, while it occasioned the deepest grief amongst the Hebrews, excited the most brutal exultation amongst the Greek inhabitants of Cæsarea and Sebaste. The cause of this enmity appears an impenetrable mystery, Agrippa having treated them with unvarying kindness. Their insolent conduct occasioned Claudius to command the cohorts in their city to remove into Pontus, and their places to be filled with draughts from the legions in Syria We are particular in mentioning this, because Josephus believes it to be the primary cause of the Jewish War. The mandate of the Emperor was not executed; but the disgrace was equally the same; and, rankling in the hearts of the troops, exasperated them yet more

against the Hebrews, and incited those horrible acts of oppression and cruelty which at length goaded Judea into a general revolt.

The son of Agrippa (who bore the same name) being considered too young to succeed him as sovereign, Judea relapsed into a Roman province. Agrippa remained at the court of Claudius, imbibing Roman feelings and Roman principles, so completely to the exclusion of nationality, as caused him, in the war which followed, basely to adhere to the Roman party, and to make no effort to ameliorate the condition of his countrymen. He appears to have lived occasionally at Jerusalem, at Alexandria, and at Rome, enjoying at the former city the title of King, and the power of appointing High-Priests; but otherwise his was a very empty dignity—the real government of the country resting in the hands of the Procurators. Rome, however, was his usual residence; its luxurious enjoyment being more according to his vitiated taste than the bold stand for independence which his unhappy countrymen were making. The term of his death is uncertain; but he died, as he had lived, forgetting the calamities and ruin of his country in the morally degraded, but physically secure condition of a Roman vassal. He was the last, either of the Asmonæan or Idumean race, who bore the title of King.

Meanwhile, Zadus, Tiberius (an apostate Egyptian Jew, and consequently yet more odious to the people than the Romans themselves), Cumanus, Felix, Festus, Albinus, and Florus, had been successive Procurators of Judea; occupying a period of rather more than twenty years—a term brief in itself, but fraught with increasing misery to the inhabitants of Palestine. Each Procurator appeared more oppressive, more exacting than the last. Insults from the Roman soldiery, constantly accompanying those religious forms and ceremonies, which, in consequence, had become yet dearer, were answered by fiery spirits ripe for vengeance; and this, of course, was followed by indiscriminate slaughter of the Jews. Massacres of hundreds, even of thousands, took place under every Procurator, not only in Judea but in Syria; and we are told that, after the defeat of the Romans under Cestus by the excited Hebrews, the citizens of Damascus massacred ten thousand of their Hebrew brethren, notwithstanding their own wives were all attached to Judaism.

Pillage and insult, of course, accompanied these fearful

massacres. All legal authority was at an end. Though the high priesthood was retained, the temple worship continued, the outward ordinances of the feasts and fasts observed, yet the beautiful laws, guiding not only communities but households, were swallowed up in the vortex of oppression, insult, and misery, which, under the administration of Florus, reached its crisis. The evil passions of man were alone visible. Robbers and assassins, the last blaspheming the mild law of Moses, by pretending its authority for their deeds of blood—were amongst the Jews themselves—and devastated both province and city. Divided within themselves—so goaded by oppression, that the dictates of humanity were unheard—party spirit utterly preventing that national union which alone could hope for success—without a leader—without a plan—for the most part regardless of the laws of either God or man; such was the condition of the country on the eve of its general revolt. Darkness, morally and mentally, had gathered round; and it was no marvel. The return from Babylon had been granted as a trial of their return to their God and the pure worship of their ancestors. He inspired a heathen sovereign to grant them liberty and independence. It was in their power then to have come back, heart and soul, to the pure and faithful observance of His law, to the making the Land of Promise once more a Holy Land—resting on the blessing, the guidance, the sovereignty of their God. He gave them free will to choose; and we have seen that choice:—a union from the first with surrounding nations, a lingering amidst the heathen lands, or invitations to the heathen within their own—adoption of heathen customs—faithful in the hour of persecution, only to relapse into indifference when the iron rod was withdrawn—the Priesthood, the Sovereignty stained with crimes, even to read which causes the blood to curdle—alliance with the Heathen Mistress of the world, instead of that pure reliance on the Eternal to increase prosperity and dominion, which His law ordained—the holy religion he deigned to teach, so fitted for every class and condition of men, split into opposing factions, arming each against the other—statues and images desecrating the Temple and the land, erected indeed by the Romans, but originating primarily in the Jewish assimilation and alliance with that nation. Was it marvel that the Eternal, in His justice, should make the sin of their assimilation with other nations the very

means of their punishment?—and that the power they had courted, flattered, made voluntary submission to (because the Roman name was omnipotent in earthly glory, earthly greatness, forgetting that if they trusted in and served their God, His word had gone forth to make them greatest amongst the nations) was it marvel that that power should be the instrument in the Eternal's hand to execute His wrath? We shud der at the horrible oppressions of which we read. Its *human* agency must excite our abhorrence, as it would the anger of the Lord; but on themselves the Jews had hurled it; they reaped the wretchedness their own hands had sown.

But let it not be supposed, in the fearful state to which the nation was reduced, that there were none to uphold the glory of the Lord, and be his witnesses on earth. In the tumultuous annals of the period—in the vast and whelming ocean of despair and misery and crime, how may the historian discern and bring forward those who were yet faithful and accepted servants of the most high God? Yet even as the Eternal promised that Israel should never cease from being a nation before Him, so has he equally promised that He would never be without his witnesses on earth; and, therefore, are we bound to believe that even in this awful epoch of Jewish history, aye, throughout its dark annals of previous years, there were yet, as there had been in the days of Elijah, "seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal." In every faction, every party, there were noble and faithful spirits of either sex acting or enduring a martyr's part—leavening many a mass of otherwise foul iniquity, and as acceptable to the Almighty as the saints of old. We see them not, we know them not, for not on earth may we "discern between the righteous and the wicked"—not on earth may their fate be distinct—not in the threatened vengeance of the Eternal might a miracle interpose to protect His faithful from the destruction waiting the rebellious and the sinful, but in His heaven, the distinction between him that serveth Him and him that served him not, was made. And therefore did he permit universal misery and destruction to whelm all on earth, as a warning to the nations, as a witness of His word, a fulfilment of his threatened wrath for disobedience; preparing for the thousands that had not bowed the knee to Baal, such transcendent glory and unspeakable happiness with Him that the evils they had

endured below seemed but as "a watch in the night,"—or as the transient pang of "yesterday when it is passed."

In this rapid and very imperfect sketch of the history of Judea, from the return from Babylon to the commencement of the war under the administration of the odious Florus, A.C. 66, we have seen how little of rest or independence she enjoyed—that in fact massacre and persecution even for religion may be dated many years, even centuries, before the general dispersion—that the national divisions of tribes, both of land and people, were entirely lost—the throne not once occupied by that royal branch of David which the Eternal has so expressly promised—that the Jews had settled by their own will in various parts of the word besides Jerusalem. And, having seen all this, do we need more than a knowledge of our own history to refute the assertion of our adversaries, that our return from Babylon fulfilled the prophecies? Shall we not rather, in deepest gratitude and consolation, take them to our hearts and believe in their fulfilment YET TO COME! rejoicing even as did the venerable Akiba, who laughed when his companions wept, at beholding a fox run out from the place where the Holy of Holies once stood; and, being asked the wherefore of such unseemly mirth, replied by inquiry wherefore they wept: "Should we not weep," they answered, "when we see the curse so clearly verified: 'for the mountain of Sion, foxes shall walk upon it!'"

"And therefore do I laugh," replied the venerable man. "Whilst the evil remained unaccomplished, there might have been doubts entertained for the fulfilment of the good promised by our prophets; but now, when we see the evil coming to pass, can we possibly doubt the eventual fulfilment of the consolation of Zion, and does not God rather reward than punish?" And shall we not also rejoice; for Akiba's hope is ours!

CHAPTER IV.

THE MARTYR MOTHER.

In a time so fraught with national confusion, foreign alliances, treacherous peace, or destructive war, as the period which our sketch comprises, history reveals but little to aid us in our attempt to delineate the character and condition of our female ancestors. Yet that little is most important, tending ananswerably to prove the exaltation of our social position, the elevation of our individual character, and also to convince us that there was not a single law then in force that could, either morally, physically, or socially debase us. We shall find the influence of woman actuating man, in more than one instance, for the evil unhappily, also with the good; but the very power of the evil is, as we have before said, an argument in favor of our equality and freedom.

During the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes, the sufferings of the women of Israel must have been as fearful, as their constancy and fidelity were powerful proofs, of the perfect adaptation of the Law of the Eternal, to their temporal and spiritual wants. Never could a religion which made them soulless slaves, have become so dear, so part of their very hearts, that it was easier to endure torture, and slavery, and death rather than depart from it themselves, or refuse its privileges to their infant sons. Eighty thousand persons, men, women, and children, slain in the forcible entrance of Antiochus within Jerusalem, and forty thousand of both sexes sold into slavery, was the horrible preface to the misery which followed. Every observance of the Law, from the keeping of the Sabbath and the Covenant of Abraham, to the minutest form, was made a capital offence. Yet, in spite of the scenes of horror so continually recurring, the very relation of which must now make every female heart shrink and quiver—yet were there female martyrs baring their breast to the murderous knife, rather than bow down to the idol, or touch forbidden food. Women, young, meek, tender, performed with their own hands the Covenant of

Abraham upon their sons, because none else would so dare the tyrant's wrath; and with their infants (for whose immortal souls they had thus incurred the rage of man) suspended round their necks, received death by being flung from the battlements of the Temple into the deep vale below; others were hung, and cruelties too awful to relate practised upon others. Yet no woman's spirit failed; and what must have been their attachment to their holy religion, what their sense of its responsibility, and its immortal reward, what their horror of abandoning it themselves and cutting off their sons from its sainted privileges, to incur martyrdoms like these? It is useless to argue that persecution always creates martyrs, as opposition kindles constancy. The religion degrading or brutalizing woman never yet had martyrs. The Catholic, the Protestant have had their martyrs in young and feeble women equally with ourselves; because their religion, founded upon ours, shares its heavenly privileges and spiritual love, and twines itself so round a woman's clinging breast, that it is far easier to die for it than live without it, by apostasy and falsehood. But where do we find a Mahomedan female enduring martyrdom rather than forsake the religion of the Prophet (so called)? History does not present us with one example; and why? The reply is easy. We will not say one word against the religion itself; because, equally with the Nazarene, it is doing the work of the Eternal, and teaching many nations to worship the one sole God. But its doctrine degrades woman in very truth to be the slave of man—gives her neither temporal nor spiritual privileges—treats her, looks on her as a being without soul, or, if possessing one, created even in Heaven only to minister to man's pleasures.* Is it marvel then, the Eastern women are now indeed degraded, or that amongst them we should never read of martyrs? But not such were the women of the East when it was peopled by the nation of the Lord!

Where, in the vast tomes of history, sacred or profane, shall we find a deed more heroic, a fortitude more sublime, than is recorded of Hannah, the Hebrew mother, during the persecution of Antiochus? We read in the second Maccabees, chap. vii.,

* Such at least are its *reported* doctrines. We cannot vouch for their truth or falsehood, not knowing sufficient of the religion itself, or its followers.

confirmed also by all our Hebrew writers, that a mother and her seven sons were taken, and brought before the tyrant; who, in the wantonness of cruelty, commanded them to eat the forbidden meat, commencing first with the more moderate torment of whips and scourges, but heightening them gradually to tortures, which we leave our readers to peruse in the chapter we have quoted: for the soul sickens to dwell upon them, as deliberately to write them down: we will content ourselves with repeating the words they spake in the midst of those appalling sufferings; for surely they are in themselves witness of what the religion of the Eternal taught.

"What wouldst thou ask or learn of us?" the first said: "We are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our fathers." And as his brethren beheld his lingering torments, instead of failing, they exhorted one another, and their mother, to die manfully, saying thus, "The Lord God looketh upon us, and in truth hath comfort in us, as Moses, which in his song, witnessed to their faces, declared: and he shall be comforted in his servants." To the second the question was put, "Wilt thou eat?" under threat of similar tortures, which he had witnessed, but in vain. "Thou, like a fury, takest us out of this life," he said, in the very agonies of death; "but the King of the World *shall raise us up*, who have died for his laws, *unto everlasting life*." The third himself stretched forth his limbs for the torture, saying, "These I had from Heaven, and for His Law I despise them, for *from him I expect to receive them again*." Inasmuch as the king and those that were with him, marvelled at the young man's courage, for that he nothing regarded his pains. The fourth then suffered, and he said, "It is good being put to death by man, to look for hope from God *to be raised up again for Him;* as for thee, thou shalt have no resurrection to life." And the fifth, in his dying agony, calmly looked upon the king, and said, "Thou hast power over men, but art corruptible; thou doest what thou wilt; but think not our nation is forsaken of God; but abide awhile, and behold His great power, how He will torment thee and thy seed." And the sixth being ready to die, emulating his brothers' constancy, addressed the tyrant, "Be not deceived without cause: we suffer these things for ourselves having sinned against God, therefore marvellous things are done unto us; but think not thou, who

takest in hand to strive against God, that thou shalt escape unpunished."

Nor was it one alone who thus endured. The Hebrew mother witnessed these agonizing tortures, done not unto one, but unto six of her cherished offspring. Yet how do our elders speak of her: "The mother was marvellous above all, and worthy of honorable memory; for when she saw her seven sons slain within the space of one day, *she bare it with a good courage, because of the hope that she had in the Lord.* Yes, she exhorted every one of them in her own language, filled with courageous spirit, and stirring up her womanish thoughts with a manly stomach, she said unto them, 'I cannot tell how ye came into my womb, for I neither gave you breath nor life; neither was it I who formed the members of every one of you; but, doubtless, the Creator of the world, who formed the generation of man, and found out the beginning of all things, will also of His *own mercy, give you breath and life again,* as ye now regard not your ownselves for His law's sake.'"

Quaint and terse as this language is, and devoid of all ornament, yet how emphatically it breathes of the extent of this mother's trial, the struggle with her "womanish feelings," and her triumph over nature, over humanity, through that superhuman faith! Nor is the trial over. One still remained—her youngest born; probably still the tender and best-beloved of his mother—one round whom the bleeding tendrils of her lacerated heart must have clung in such unutterable love; her last, her loveliest; and, evidently, from the tyrant's own words, one in the first and freshest prime of youth, when life has so many rich enjoyments, it seems doubly hard to turn from them to the cold, dark grave; and heaven's perfected happiness, to such ardent spirits, feels dim and distant, compared to the present joy of earth. We know he was of such an age, and such aspirings, else the temptations of the tyrant would not have been couched in promises to make him a rich and happy man, and take him for his friend, and trust him with affairs, only on condition of his deserting the law of his fathers: and when the young man would not hearken to him, the king called upon the mother, and exhorted her with many words to counsel him to save his life. He believed nature, in such a case, must triumph; for he knew not the hope beyond the grave, which could still

the throbbings of maternal love; and bid, even on earth, the Angel triumph over the Human—the Immortal shine above the Mortal!

Calmly she listened to the tyrant's "many words," and then bowing to him as about to obey, addressed her son in her own language, "Oh, my son, have pity on me who love thee, and gave thee suck three years, and nourished thee, and brought thee up unto this age, and endured the troubles of education, I beseech thee, my Son, look upon the Heaven and upon the earth, and all that is therein, and consider that God made them of things that were not, and so was mankind also. Fear not this tormentor, but, being worthy of thy brethren, take thy death, *that I may receive thee again in mercy with thy brethren.*" And even while she was yet speaking, the young man said, "Whom wait ye for? I will not obey the king's commandment; but I will obey the commandment of the Law that was given unto our Fathers by Moses. And thou that hast been the author of all the mischief against the Hebrews, shalt not escape the hands of God; for we suffer because of our sins; and though the living God be angry with us a little while for our chastening and correction, yet He shall return, and be again with His servants. But thou, O most godless man, and of all others most wicked, be not lifted up without cause, nor puffed up with uncertain hopes, lifting up thy hand against the servants of God; for thou hast not yet escaped the judgment of Almighty God, who seeth all things. For our brethren who now have suffered a short pain, *are dead under God's covenant of everlasting life;* but thou, through the judgment of God, shalt receive just punishment for thy pride. But I, like my brethren, offer up my body and life for the Laws of our Fathers, beseeching God that He would speedily be merciful unto our nation, and that thou, by torments and plagues, mayst confess that he alone is God, and that in me, and in my brethren, the wrath of the Almighty, which is justly brought upon all our nation, may cease." Then the king being in a rage handled him worse than all the rest, and took it grievously that He was mocked; so this man died undefiled, *and put his whole trust in the Lord.* Last of all, after the sons, the mother died. "Let this be enough," the writer concludes, "now to have spoken concerning the idolatrous feasts, and the extreme tortures."

Enough? It is enough indeed for every Israelite to dwell

upon, not with shuddering horror, not with that squeamish kind of affected feeling which pretends incapacity to look fearful truths in the face, but with emotions of intense thankfulness, that such a record has been left us, bearing such faithful witness as it does to the true Israelite's belief. It is not merely a record of superhuman heroism, alike in male and female. It is not merely a proof of the little moment in which torture and death were held by the Hebrews, compared with which the far famed firmness of Spartan and Roman mothers sinks into nothing. It is the *doctrines* betrayed throughout, which, revealed at such a moment, must have impregnated the very existence of the Israelite; and these doctrines may be treasured up as invaluable evidences of all which was taught by our Holy Law, however some may disbelieve the actual Tale of Martyrdom in which they are disclosed. The books of the Maccabees in the Apocrypha are on all points the exact counterpart of the same history in Josephus, and also of Antiochus Epiphanes in Rollin.

There can be no doubt that the books were written by a *Hebrew* for his countrymen; and therefore the words put into the mouths of the sufferers must have been the exact transcript of the Hebrew's true belief. If the doctrine of immortality—that hope beyond death and the grave—was, as it is reported, unknown and unrevealed to the Israelites, what could have inspired, not only the hope itself, but the expression of that hope, in the very midst of torture and anguish which human nature of itself could never have sustained? We have quoted the words of the sufferers at full length, only to illustrate this doctrine—to prove, that, all of immortality—of resurrection—of being with God in Heaven—of re-union there with our beloved ones—of the transientness of the severest agonies below compared to the permanency of bliss awaiting us above—that all was revealed to us, all was known to every Hebrew—male and female, childhood and age—believed in, acted upon, ages before the advent of that religion which was the first, her followers believe, to inculcate such doctrines. In a work like the present, we may not dilate on this glorious subject as much as inclination prompts—but oh! let us not, by present indifference, by stagnant ignorance, or fearful shrinking from the idea of death, give our opponents only too much reason to believe, that to them alone has been revealed the con-

solation, the glory, the blessedness of the belief and hope in Immortality.

Great emergencies will often create great characters; but in the narrative which we have been considering, we read something more in the character of the Hebrew mother, than even the heroism which she displayed. By her close connexion with her sons, in being brought before the tyrant, and condemned to share their fate, it is clear that though a woman in Israel, her influence must have been supposed of some consequence. That her sons owed their all to her, even to their education, and that her influence on them was very great, we read alike in her own words, and in the appeal of the king to her, to save by her exhortations her youngest born. There is no mention of a father; she had probably been from the infancy of her children, that especially beloved of the Eternal, a widow in Israel. And in the calm courage, the noble words of each of her sons, we learn the education she had given. They had probably been amongst the valiant, though unsuccessful defenders of their land; amongst the faithful few, who, in the very face of the persecutor, dared to obey the law of Moses, and refused every effort to turn them from their God. Would this patriotism, this devotedness, have come at the moment needed, had it not been taught, infused from earliest boyhood—by example as well as precept? A mother in Israel could be herself no warrior, but she could raise up warriors—she could be no priest, but she could create priests—she could not face the battle's front, or drive the idolatrous invader from God's Holy Land—she could not stem the torrent of persecution and of torture; but she could raise up those who would seek the one, and, by unshrinking death, bear witness to the fruitless efforts of the other; and it was these things this heroic mother did. She had trained up her boys in that faithfulness, that constancy, which could only spring from virtue. She must have taught them, aye, infused it with her very milk, that the pains and troubles of this world are, in their sharpest agony, but of a moment's duration, compared with the everlasting blessedness awaiting them in Heaven. She must have taught them, that death itself was but a darkened portal, opening into an infinity of glory; that man might, indeed, have power over this present life; but over the future, what mortal could have dominion?—that all they possessed, even to the members of the body, life itself, they

had had from God, to whom they were ready to resign them, knowing that from him they would be received again—that even in that extremity of bodily torture, their lot was happier than that of their tormentor, for *their* heritage was everlasting, but *his* was corruptible, and vanishing with a breath. She must have taught them in the true spirit of the Law, that, however persecuted, however sinful in themselves, their nation would *never* be forsaken by God; yet, that it was for *their sins* they suffered, not to gratify the exulting tyranny of their persecutor, but for themselves, for the sins of their hapless countrymen. Their sufferings in the flesh were to make manifest to the whole world, God's judgment upon His children for their national sin; but that still to the virtuous, even such a death had no sting, for their earthly sufferings bore witness to the *justice;* and their Heavenly reward, to the *mercy* of their God. She must have infused within them, that pure beautiful spirit of self-devotion, which is *woman's own*, and can only be imparted by woman to the more selfish, more calculating man, else we should not find the last and youngest martyr, beseeching God, even at that terrible moment, to turn His just wrath from His people; and that the sacrifice of himself and his brethren for the laws of their fathers, might be so accepted as to cause the national misery to cease. All this (and in such doctrines, how much more is comprised than we can trace in a brief survey!) she must have taught her boys. We hear her herself refer to the labors of education, as an additional incentive to her son's obedience; and we must be convinced, that all their heroism, firmness, self-devotedness sprang from her, and had become part of their very being, years before such exalted principles were thus called upon to be displayed.

Will not this narrative then strongly confirm all that we have stated in the second chapter of our second period, as elevating the position and marking the duties of Jewish mothers? Will it not prove that the mothers of Ancient Israel were perfectly aware of all the responsibility attendant on them, in the education of their sons—and that they really were included in the charge of Moses, contained in Deut. vi. 20—25. The education given by this martyr mother to her sons, is an exact illustration of the manner in which these ordinances were obeyed, including also the instruction in the history, theocracy, and claims of Israel down to the times in which they lived. And how could

this be, if the Jewish female were lowered by social treatment to the position of a slave or a heathen, on whom no responsibility, no religious duty devolved. Be the narrative itself truth or tradition, it matters not; the ancient fathers would never have given woman that influence and elevation in *tradition*, which had not its foundation in truth—would never have made her occupy that position in tradition which the ordinance of the law forbade. This consideration is most important to us: for we are now rapidly advancing to the period, whence it is said Modern Judaism, in contradistinction to Ancient Judaism, takes its rise. There will be many perhaps to agree with the theories formed on Scripture, already brought forward; but to declare it is Modern, or what is termed Rabbinical Judaism, which they condemn. We hope to satisfy such inquirers, that even in rabbinical Judaism there is no foundation whatever for the degradation of woman.

And what were the "wages" received by the martyr mother, for thus "nursing her boys for God?" Could it be their earthly tortures, their agonizing deaths? Alas! what female heart, in its first natural weakness, will not shrink and quiver, and feel, if such must be her wages, how can she nurse her child for God? How may she instil such feelings, if torture and death must be their reward! Why are obedience, constancy, allegiance, virtue, said to be acceptable to the Most High, when such is their earthly end, and the sinful, the faithless, the apostate are spared and enjoy? Let us ponder on what was the support, the hope, aye even at that moment, the triumph, of Hannah.* Did she feel as if that trial's intolerable agony were indeed her "wages?" We know not how a frail weak woman could thus have looked on, and instead of unnerving them by cries and sobs, encouraged them to suffer still. God gave her power (it was not in humanity), and so increased the strength, the might, the vividness, of those hopes beyond the grave, which she had felt and realized so long, that the blessedness awaiting her children with their God, seemed palpably revealed. The veil of flesh, of corruption, was rent from her mortal eyes, and all which the Lord had prepared for those that love Him, unseen by human eye and unheard by human ear, was through her pure FAITH disclosed; nothing else could have so sustained her, or given

* She is so called in Rollin, though I know not from what authority he takes the name.

the immortal spirit such dominion. We are expressly told "she stirred up her womanly thoughts with a manly resolve." Consequently we know and feel, that she had all a woman's nature. "Take thy death," she bade her youngest born, "*that I may receive thee again in mercy with thy brethren.*" Had an angel from Heaven spoken in her ear these words, she could not have believed more strongly. "The Lord will of His own mercy give you life and breath again," she had before said; and if she had fear when she exhorted her youngest born, it was, not that he should pass away from her earthly love, but by his acceptance of the tyrant's proffers, be lost to her in Heaven; Faith, Trust, Hope, these then were her sustainers: she had brought up her children not for Earth, but for Heaven; not for Time but for Eternity; and she knew that she should receive her wages, not from Earth but in His presence, for whom her boys were martyred; and can we doubt for a single moment that those "wages" *were* received—can we believe in the God of love, whom Pentateuch, Psalms, and Prophets, all reveal, and yet allow the faintest shadow of an unbelieving thought to come across our minds? Can we with a sceptic's fearful scorn, refuse faith in another purer, lovelier world, where such noble and faithful spirits receive their promised recompense, because to the finite sight, hearing, and wisdom, of frail poor humanity, it has not been visibly or palpably revealed? No! no! stagnant and indifferent as Israel may sometimes appear, he never has thus fallen, never can reject that unutterably consoling revelation of immortality, which became his own glorious heritage, long long ages before it was vouchsafed to the Gentile world.

By the words "Last of all, after the sons, the mother died," and no mention of tortures, we may hope that, if the tyrant commanded her death, it was comparatively easy, or, which is our own belief, that the Eternal, in His infinite mercy, Himself called her to rejoin her sons, never, never more to be separated from them. The spirit might be supernaturally strengthened, to make manifest such firmness and faithfulness as would exalt the glory of the Lord; but the physical powers must have sunk beneath it. And if the tyrant did indeed put the seal to the work of butchery by slaying her, he did but forestall the death which would inevitably have come—and his cruelty in this instance was mercy.

It may be said, that striking as this narrative is, it cannot

bear upon us now, either as guidance or example, and that, even if it could, it would be impossible for us to imitate the heroism of which we read. Earnestly we trust that such manifestations of faithfulness are indeed no longer needed.

Yet that mother's lessons may still be to us as guidance—may teach us how we should instruct our children, so as to provide them against the arrows of misfortune, which ere life close may assail them, either through bodily affliction or mental woe. Religion, real spiritual religion, *will not* find resting in the human heart unless infused—unless made the first great object in childhood: not to affect with gloom, but inexpressibly to deepen the enjoyment and hilarity of youth. Affliction may do the work for us in riper years, and bring the soul to its God—because earth has become a void—its former pleasures dashed with poison; but oh! it is a fearful thing, when we wait for affliction to teach us our God—when sorrow must be sent to bring us to Him. If the mother would but look forward——would but sometimes think that the sweet and smiling babe upon her lap, the laughing girl and merry boy, now playing in such shadowless glee around her knee, may one day be bowed down in sorrow, exposed to bodily pain—to bereavement—to one or more of the numberless sorrows ever incidental to humanity; nay, to privation of health, of sight, of use of limb—will they not, must they not seek to provide them with some unfailing refuge, some fadeless hope and inward consolation? Why are they so anxious to provide for their temporal welfare, to secure provision for earthly wants, resources of education, enjoyment, ambition, wealth?—why fill the infant mind with every branch of learning, and train it to think, and calculate, and act? Why be so careful of all these things, did not the thought of the *Future* guide the workings of the *Present*—did not love itself become ambition, and future hope inexpressibly heighten present enjoyment? And these thoughts, these hopes, are natural, and right: but why provide only for a future of *Success* and of *Joy?* These things may be. It may please our Father in Heaven to fulfil the mother's every wish, and make her child's future as smiling as its present; but it may equally please Him to try that cherished darling in the ordeal of adversity; and then, if he have only been provided for a future of prosperity, oh, what shall sustain him? How may he bear up against the trials which may be his, as well as of thousands of his fellows?

No! mothers of Israel: let us ever train our children for a future, and strengthen them for sorrow as well as for joy. Should we think our duty done did we provide them only with summer clothing, and expose them unprotected to the wintry blast and howling storm? Might they not with justice reproach us in the first tempest, if we bade them thus set forth on the journey of life? However smiling as far as the eye can pierce, is not the horizon enveloped in such mists, that we know not whether it conceal sunshine or storm—and shall we send forth our beloved one provided only for the one?

Let it not be thought that, to inculcate piety—that clinging love of and confidence in God, the only support of mental or bodily affliction—demands a relinquishment of the bouyant light-heartedness of childhood. Far from it. The peculiar susceptibility of childhood to emotions of gladness and love, renders the task easy and most blessed (if the right moment be seized) to lift up the young spirit to the kind and loving Father who has given so many things to love and to enjoy. And when the young mind has expanded to a consciousness of the temporal enjoyments it has received from God, let it rise still higher, in the tale of that world where there is no sin, no pain, no change, but where joy and love live for ever—where their souls will be with God and His angels, if they seek to live there, and in all they do, and think, and feel, pray and seek to love and serve the heavenly Father who is so good to them in this world, and has provided such a home for them with Him. Teach them that sorrow and pain are *not* proofs of their Father's *wrath*, but of His *love*—that all he does is love, however we may not understand it—that much, very much, must puzzle us while we are on earth, but that we shall understand it all in Heaven, and till then, if we will but believe He loves us, and all he does is love, we may be sorrowful and sad for a time; but we know He will once more give us joy.

Lessons like these, united with a firm observance of the ordinances and commands of Judaism, will indeed be blessed to our children, even though we see not their fruit till long, long years after the first seeds were planted. Let us not suppose, because we can discern nothing in the heedlessness, the levity, the occasional faults, even the apparent indifference to spiritual things, in our offspring, that we have worked in vain. Let sorrow, let sickness come, and our children will bless the parental

love which, under God, has provided them with such hopes, such thoughts, that pain itself is comparatively easy to be borne, and sorrow is assuaged. Better, far better provide for adversity a hundred times, and the provision be not needed, than one case in which the sufferer shall need religious comfort, and in vain—and in bitterness of anguish exclaim, "Why was I not taught to know and love God?—why not guided in my childhood to that holy consolation of which I hear others speak, but which I cannot feel?" How in the midst of suffering can we teach that God is Love? How can the bruised and broken spirit lift up its thoughts to heaven, when it has, until that moment, been chained to earth? If the soul, in health and joy, has not been taught that it has wings, wherewith, even in its earthly shell, to fly to heaven, how may we hope to use them when they lie crushed and broken beneath the heavy hand of woe? It is vain to hope it! Then, oh!—would we do our duty to our children—would we indeed provide for their future—would we have them recall us, with the tenderest love and deepest gratitude, long, long after we may have passed away from earth?—let us imitate the Martyr-Mother, and, clothing them for affliction as well as joy, nurse them from their infancy for God; and we shall indeed receive them once again in mercy from His hand—and in His presence for everlasting.

CHAPTER V.

MOTHER OF JOHN HYRCANUS.—WIFE OF JOHN HYRCANUS.—ALEXANDRA.

The victim of Antiochus was not the only instance of singular heroism and self-devotedness amongst the Mothers in Israel. Her sacrifice of all natural feelings, which we have been regarding, originated in a faithfulness and constancy to a persecuted faith—a resolution to dare all the torture of Earth rather than, by disobedience and apostasy, lose the glories of Heaven. This

was love of faith and race; we are now to behold patriotism as strong and fervid a feeling in the woman of Israel, as in the women of the Gentile nations, whose deeds are trumpeted by fame.

Simon, the last of the heroic Maccabæan brothers, and the General and High Priest of Judea, was inveigled by his son-in-law Ptolemy, to the fortress of Jericho, and there, at a banquet, assassinated. His eldest son shared his fate; and efforts were made in the same treacherous spirit to capture John Hyrcanus, Simon's third son, at Gazara. The young man, however, escaped the danger, and, appearing in Jerusalem, was universally acknowledged as the successor to his father, Prince and High Priest of Judea. Burning with desire to avenge the death of Simon, he marched with his forces instantly to Jericho. Ptolemy had, however, obtained possession of the mother and the brethren of Hyrcanus, and with his captives shut himself up in a strong fortress in that town. Hyrcanus instantly laid his plans for a close siege; but drew back appalled as he beheld his mother and brothers exposed on the walls, scourged and tortured before his eyes, with the threat if he did not instantly withdraw his forces, they should be put to death. Josephus expressly tells us, that the force of Hyrcanus was stronger than Ptolemy's, "*but he was rendered weaker by the commiseration he had for his mother and brethren*," a touching proof of his filial affection. He knew that Ptolemy, in conjunction with Antiochus Sidetis, king of Syria, was seeking to overthrow Judea, and therefore, danger to his country as well as a father's murder, called upon him to capture Ptolemy. But still he hesitated; would have withdrawn, had not his heroic mother stretched out her hands imploringly towards him, beseeching him to heed her not, but to revenge the cruel treachery done unto his father. Torture and death for herself and her children awaited her; but still, with noble and unshrinking courage, she called on Hyrcanus to renew the siege. While the spirit of son and warrior absolutely quailed before, only *witnessing* the sufferings of his mother, the mother and the woman failed not under their *infliction*. What was her life (she probably felt), and even the life of her two young sons, compared with those treacherously slain, and with the valiant and energetic warrior who still remained? Why should her sufferings so unnerve his stalwart arm as to tempt him to raise the siege, and so perhaps expose

him to the displeasure of the people, who, though they had so lately made him Prince and Priest, might turn from him with a breath? The wife and mother of Asmonæus, she had imbibed their spirit, and displayed it when most needed. Their captor flung indelible disgrace upon his manhood, by seeking terms with his foe, through the torture of a woman; but fearlessly she scorned alike the torturer and his tortures; she could not fear death, for she was a woman of Israel, whose sure and steadfast hope was fixed above.

Inspired by her heroic words, Hyrcanus recommenced the siege with vigor, but at every fresh cruelty offered to his mother he appears to have relaxed; and thus, according to Josephus, the siege was protracted to the sabbatic year, when all offensive warfare was forbidden; and in consequence, he withdrew his forces; but his withdrawal did not save his mother; Ptolemy slew both her and her sons, and fled to Philadelphia; and history mentions him no more.

There is nothing in this anecdote to interest us as women, in a domestic point of view. The mother of Hyrcanus is brought before us, only as a noble-minded heroine, who cared not for personal suffering, so the murderer of her husband and son was brought to justice, and her country rid of his treacherous intrigues. We do not hold her up as an example to our young countrywomen, because we trust that they will never be exposed to such a trial, and we have not enough of her to know if her previous life were in accordance with the heroism displayed in peril. We must not allow admiration of *greatness* to usurp the place in our hearts due to the admiration of *goodness*, more especially as we are *always* called upon to cultivate and display the latter, and not once in a century, not one individual in a thousand, required to make manifest the former. Admiration of greatness, if too much encouraged, occasions a neglect of goodness; seeking for opportunities to make manifest the one, we overlook the innumerable opportunities in our daily life to prove the other. The one lives but in excitement, the other at home; and modern women must be content to exchange the one for the other, or their lives must be unhappy; for in these matter-of-fact prosaic days, where shall we find adventures to make us feel and act as heroines?

Not to call forth romantic admiration, have we brought this incident forward, but simply to prove that, in time of need,

Israel as well as every other nation had her great and noble-minded heroines. Qualities such as the mother of Hyrcanus displayed, are the offspring of freedom only. The affection, the reverence borne her by her son, deprived him of his wonted energy, unnerved his heart, and bade his sword lie powerless. This marks the distinction between a heroine of Israel and a heroine of savages: even amongst the latter we may find the heroism of endurance, but not the filial affection, which would pause in the midst of a triumphant career, appalled and powerless, because a mother suffered. The affection of Hyrcanus is even a more convincing proof of the elevation to which the woman of Israel could attain, than her own fortitude; while her address, and its inspiring effect, must convince us that the men of Israel disdained not to derive increase of courage and of firmness from a woman's lips: and would this, could this be, if it were the mandate of their law to degrade and to enslave her?

A still more powerful proof of the perfect equality of the women in Israel, in the eyes of their husbands, and of all the people, is the curious and important fact, that more than one sovereign of Israel left his kingdom to his WIFE. Now this is a custom, or even an instance, found in the annals of no other nation, except in the Semiramis of Babylon and the Catharine of Russia; and these became queens, less from the will of their husbands than their own successful ambition. Whereas, in Israel, it never appeared to excite surprise, even though the turbulence of the people or the rebellion of sons prevented the actual government of a queen, except in one instance.

That the wife of John Hyrcanus should have had such a monster for her son as Aristobulus the First was her misfortune; but his violently depriving her of the authority which his father had left her, does not at all interfere with the bequeathment itself, or lessen the importance of the facts derived from that bequeathment. Josephus tells us, speaking of Aristobulus, and of his ambitious design of changing the government into a kingdom, "He also cast his mother into prison, because she disputed the government with him; for Hyrcanus had *left her to be mistress of all.* He also proceeded to that degree of barbarity, as to kill her in prison with hunger." The extreme cruelty of his conduct marks his fear of her influence, and the people's support of her authority. That Hyrcanus left her to be "mistress of all".

very forcibly proves the high esteem in which he must have held her, even if that bequeathment devolved on her an office which it was impossible for her sex to hold, that of High Priest. We are rather to suppose that he left to her judgment, which he had no doubt previously well proved, the choice of a successor for that office from amongst his sons, and the rest of the administration to be retained by her. Had she been unfitted by insufficient mental ability, for the retention of this high and responsible office, Aristobulus need not have proceeded to extremities. Whereas we read her capability, influence, and authority, in the awful measures which this monster of barbarity adopted. Far happier would it have been for her to have occupied a domestic station in Israel; but her story is a strong confirmation of all we have advanced.

Already had the opposing factions of traditionists and anti-traditionists appeared in Judea. The former, under the name of the Pharisees, insisted that the observances which they had handed down to the people, though not written in the Law of Moses, were equally obligatory. The latter, under the cognomen of Sadducees, rejected them as obligatory, and adhered only to the written Law. We only mention this important fact, to add weight to our argument, that neither traditional nor written Judaism could authorize the abasement of women either socially or domestic, as we shall find the Pharisees giving all their powerful support to a female's authority, which could hardly have been, if tradition forbade her to assume it.

The death of Aristobulus, who had succeeded in changing the government into a kingdom, left the nation without an acknowledged head. Antigonus, the next brother to Aristobulus, had been murdered by his orders, and his three other brothers retained in prison. One might suppose that the nobility of the nation would at once have proceeded to action in the choice of a sovereign; but we find a *woman* acting for them. Salome, the wife of Aristobulus, instead of retaining the regal dignity herself, which it is very evident she might have done, chose the wiser course of acting. We do not read of her taking counsel with any one; but, entirely by her own will and pleasure, and on her own authority, she released her husband's brethren from prison, and made Alexander Jannæus king. Her individual power and authority must undoubtedly have been great, or she could not have thus acted. Nor could she have been an ambitious woman:

but we do not hold her forth as a good or amiable character, so little being reported of her; and that little, if we are to believe the words of Josephus, not in her favor. Her independent authority and undisputed influence are all we need as evidences of the freedom and equality of her social state.

The reign of Alexander Jannæus lasted twenty-seven years, varied by foreign wars and domestic seditions. A fearful vengeance on his disaffected subjects in Jerusalem, however, produced peace; and, for the remainder of his reign, his iron rule retained them in subjection. His foreign policy had been equally successful; and many conquered provinces were added to his hereditary possessions. When, however, he was seized by a mortal malady, three years after his subjection of the insurgents, he trembled for the fate of his kingdom. A turbulent and angry people, and provinces so newly conquered, were little likely to submit to the rule of women and children. Yet still we do not perceive any change in his resolution, founded on the customs of his country, to leave his kingdom to his wife.

Instead of taking counsel, we find him summoning his wife Alexandra to his bedside, and giving such advice as forcibly manifests her power to follow it. Even granting that he did not say the exact words which Josephus puts into his mouth, yet the Hebrew woman must have been quite capable of undertaking the solemn responsibility, and of accomplishing all he desired, or Josephus himself, well acquainted with the customs and habits of the strict Jews, would not have had the veracity of his narrative doubted, by giving her instructions which a fettered position must have entirely prevented her fulfilling.

Fully aware of the desolate and painful position in which she and her children would be left by the death of her husband—"She came to him," as Josephus says, "weeping and lamenting;" but Alexander roused himself from the stupor of his mortal illness to give such advice as would secure the kingdom to her and tranquillity to the people. He bade her conceal his death from his soldiers till the fortress (Ragabah, near Jordan) which he was besieging, had been subdued; and then to march to Jerusalem in triumph, place his body in the hands of the Pharisees, whom he had so mortally offended during his life, to do with as they pleased, and promise to conduct the affairs of

government under their advice and approbation. "If thou dost but say this to them," Josephus makes him continue, "I shall have the honor of a more glorious funeral from them than thou couldst have made for me; and when it is in their power to abuse my dead body they will do it no injury at all, and thou wilt rule in safety."

And his wise policy was followed. That he should have given such to his wife must suppose a perfect conviction on his part that her sex would be no hindrance to its performance; and that he had perfect confidence in her abilities for the task. Surely, then, wives in Israel must have held a very distinguished position! We know that no statute in the written Law existed to their disadvantage; and we must be equally sure that there was none in the traditions, else surely Alexander would not have desired his wife to throw herself upon the mercy of a set of men who, if tradition contained a single statute confining her to an inferior and powerless position, rendering her a mere nonentity before God and man, would have been actually *compelled*, from their own guiding laws, to deprive her of all authority, refuse obedience to her husband's bequest, and drive her ignominiously from her inherited throne.

The Pharisees were strict, orthodox, unyielding traditionists, enthusiasts, and zealots—often led on to mistaken violence by their excess of zeal—exposing themselves a hundred times during the war to increase of misery and torture from their unshrinking adherence to the minutest point of traditional laws. Yet these very men not only permit a woman to ascend the throne of Judea, hold the reins of government, levy troops, have complete dominion over her sons, who were both of sufficient age to claim the crown themselves, but actually defend her upon it, and, even on her death-bed, demand her counsel, refusing to decide themselves while she was alive, however ill she might be. The anti-traditionist may persist in his belief that the woman of Israel *is* degraded, and bring forward detached sentences from our venerable teachers wherewith to prove it; but, with the history of the past so vividly before us, we heed them not at all.

Alexandra appears fully to have possessed the necessary qualities for the cautious mode of proceeding which her husband advised. Her very first action proves her capable of immense control and strong fortitude, else she could hardly have preserved

the secret of her husband's death, and so pushed forward the siege as to succeed in conquering the fortress. She must have been well acquainted with the secrets of military command, of retaining a tumultuous soldiery in obedience: for all orders supposed to be sent them from their dying king, must have had their origin in herself alone. Had she had advisers, the secret of Alexander's death could not have been preserved, and its very first rumor would most probably have occasioned revolt. The brief notice of the historians: "So Alexandra, when she had taken the fortress, &c." "Alexandra followed the counsels of her husband, &c." "His widow Alexandra immediately adopted the policy, &c.;" gives but a weak idea of the painful and difficult position in which she was placed.

A widow mourning for her husband with no common grief, for the emotions of Eastern women can scarcely be measured by those of the North, yet not daring either to evince her own natural sorrow, or give the dead its due respect; an army without a head, dependent entirely on herself for their present measures to end in victory or confusion;—a kingdom still quivering and brawling in civil discord, ripe for insurrection, enraged with their monarch, yet standing in such awe of his terrible severity that, as long as they believed him still living, all thought of active rebellion was paralysed;—this was no enviable position for a feeble woman, even though her fortitude and talents were adequate to the emergency. Did the secret of his death transpire *before* she could obtain the ear of the Pharisees, she knew that the flame of civil dissension would light up from one end of Judea to the other; and who might prophesy the end?

Nobly she must have averted this evil. The soldiers of Israel were not unaccustomed to female heroism. The chronicles of their ancestors told them of a Deborah, of the female savior of the citizens of Tekoah, of Abigail, of Esther, and in later times, of the martyr mother and the noble wife of Simon; and therefore, that a woman should mingle in their ranks, and urge them on to victory, was no matter of astonishment. The fortress was gained, and a triumphant march brought them to Jerusalem, accompanied as they still believed by their dying king.

What then must have been their surprise, when, summoning the heads of the Pharisees, Alexandra committed into their

keeping the dead body of the king, and the soldiers learned that it was no commands of a warrior, but a woman's self who had thus led them on to victory. This action alone would have dazzled the eyes of the multitude, ever eager for excitement; and united as it was with the popular measure of bringing the Pharisees into power and favor, and re-establishing the traditional forms and practices which had been abolished by John Hyrcanus and his sons, but which were greatly endeared to the people, secured her their love yet more. Her giving the body of her husband to his bitterest enemies, was hailed as a proof that she had never approved of his conduct, and a very brief interval fixed her securely on her throne.

But though great authority was thus lodged in the hands of the Pharisees, the Queen was evidently a free agent in individual administration. She made her elder son Hyrcanus high priest, as a matter of course. Fortunately for the peace of the kingdom, his indolent character prevented his meddling with the politics of the day; high priesthood and kingdom owned the same acquiescence with the measures of the Pharisees: but, while Hyrcanus permitted himself to be a *passive* agent in their hands, his more energetic and enterprising mother pursued her own active and independent course. Instead of sinking into a mere shadow of a sovereign, because her domestic government was so circumscribed, she newly organized and increased the power of her armies by levying large bodies of mercenary troops, and striking terror into the hearts of all the surrounding nations. Hostages were demanded and sent; so that the depredations and petty warfare which had so often harassed the borders of Judea in the reign of Alexander, were effectually prevented, and the whole land was at peace. In all these foreign affairs, Alexandra acted alone. The Pharisees were much too busily employed in their home administration, and in their desire to obtain summary vengeance for all the insults which their body had received in the previous reign. More especially they demanded justice on those who had assisted in the massacre of the eight hundred men who had fallen victims to the severe vengeance of Alexander four years previous. Aristobulus, the queen's second son, who had long felt with secret indignation his exclusion from all power, seized the opportunity to put himself at the head of the oppressed party; and, seeking the presence of the Queen, appealed, not to her

mercy alone, but to her justice, reproaching her with "ingratitude in thus abandoning the faithful adherents of her husband to the vengeance of their enemies."

It was a difficult position for the queen, thus appealed to by both parties; but her extraordinary sagacity triumphed even over this. She saved them from the wrath of their enemies by permitting them to leave Jerusalem, enrolling them in the garrisons of the frontier cities, and gave Aristobulus, whose restless intrigues were likely to endanger the peace she had so labored to attain, the command of a large army, nominally to check the depredations of the petty prince of Chalcis, but secretly to obtain possession of Damascus. The prince was successful in accomplishing both his mother's object and his own. Damascus was taken,* and the army, a very considerable one, was won over and strongly united to his personal interests.

Alexandra reigned nine years, a breathing time of peace for her distracted country, which only waited for her death to plunge again into all the miseries of civil discord, the issue of which was complete subjection to the power of Rome. The advice of Alexander regarding the Pharisees certainly aided the domestic peace which lasted during the government of his wife; but a less enlightened, less energetic sovereign, could not have so triumphed over the difficulties of the age. There is no little wisdom in knowing when and how to submit when submission is required, and yet in so retaining individual dignity and self-respect, that the station we occupy may continue its proper elevation in the minds of common men, who so often pay to *state* the homage they refuse to *worth*. Alexandra was more truly beloved and venerated by the multitude, than any of the sovereigns who preceded or succeeded her; and this would not have been had she succumbed to the power of any party. She allowed the political administration to be carried on by the favorites of the people; but she was no idle cypher in their hands. She kept peace between the adverse bands by a measure which no weak or fearful disposition could have counselled. She guarded her kingdom from all foreign aggressions; and her people, both in her capital and in the

* According to Milman: Josephus says he did nothing considerable at Damascus; but, from the issue, we incline towards the opinion of Milman.

provinces, were prosperous and happy. Even the turbulent and ambitious spirit of her younger son did not dare display itself during the government of his mother; though, the very hour that the dangerous nature of her illness was rumored, he stole away from Jerusalem, unknown to all save his wife, to visit alternately the fortresses of his friends, and so secure their subjection and allegiance to himself.

Ill, and suffering from a mortal disease, the flight of Aristobulus at first occasioned the queen little uneasiness; but, when many messengers came with the tidings that fortress after fortress had submitted to the prince, and he was, in fact, lord of almost all the strongholds of the country, his design became apparent both to the Queen and to the Nation. The latter, or more properly speaking, the immediate followers of the Pharisaic administration, were struck with consternation, fearing the vengeance of Aristobulus for the insults offered both to his followers and house. From a careful consideration of the Queen's conduct, and reply to the nobles and Hyrcanus, when they sought her on her death-bed, and demanded her final counsel, it appears to me that her own affections and wishes sided with her younger son. She must have intimately known the character of both. Her own experience had taught her that energy, firmness, activity, were all imperatively needed to secure the peace and prosperity of the kingdom, and to preserve the popular party at its proper distance from the throne. In these qualities she must have long known Hyrcanus was greatly deficient. His extreme inertness had been of little importance when merely High Priest; but would subject both himself and his people to the dominion of a party the moment he ascended the throne. Yet he was the elder, and was rightful heir. Aristobulus, it is true, had all the qualities necessary for a monarch of Judea at that period; but he was not the heir according to seniority, and he was the known enemy to that party whose influence with the factious multitude had so long aided in preserving peace. To nominate Aristobulus was to wrong her first-born, and plunge the kingdom into civil discord with her dying breath. To nominate Hyrcanus, was to behold the same evils, only at a greater distance; and in such a painful position, alike as a mother and a sovereign, her answer to the nobles was a wise one. They had demanded her counsel as to the present posture of affairs; for that, in effect, Aristobulus was lord

of almost all the kingdom, and that it was useless and absurd for them to take counsel by themselves, while she was yet alive, how ill soever she might be;—words somewhat convincing how completely Alexandra had contrived to retain her own authority. Here are the elders of the Nation, men grey in years and wisdom, acknowledging and obeying both scriptural and traditional laws, coming to a weak and dying woman, and demanding her counsel as their sole guidance in a dangerous emergency. What would this prove regarding the social position and mental education of the Hebrew women?

But with death and eternity so near, what had the Queen of Judea further to do with life and time? How could the mother's heart, lingering with both her sons, wrong one at the expense of the other? How could the amiable and peace-loving sovereign send forth from her death-bed, such decrees as would wring tears of blood? Yet, how appear before her Maker, if her last words breathed such advice as her heart denied? It could not be, and therefore, "she bade them do what they thought proper to be done—for they had many circumstances still in their favor; a nation in good heart, an army, and money in their several treasuries. For herself, she had small concern about public affairs, now, when the strength of mind and body had already failed."

Surely, these were not the dying words of either an ambitious or an intriguing woman, but simply of one glad to lay down the toils and cares of government, and seek that immortal peace and blessedness, which, as a woman of Israel, she knew awaited her above. She died soon afterwards, at the age of seventy-three. She must, therefore, have been sixty-four when she first ascended the throne, an age which ought to increase our admiration of the courage and energy which she then displayed. We can imagine a young woman, or one even in the prime of life, nerving herself for such a difficult task as the concealing a husband's death, and carrying on a military enterprise with such skill that conquest followed; but to a woman of sixty-four, from whom all the glow, the romance of life, we imagine, has faded, the task must have been more difficult still.

It proves that her youth had been one of energy, intellect, and active usefulness, or age could not have thus displayed them. That she had been accustomed to receive the confidence

as well as the affection of her husband; that he had associated her in his civil and military government, by confiding in her bosom all his designs, else it would have been impossible for her at the age of sixty-four to claim, and to retain monarchical power. The people must have known and loved her as a wife in Israel, or in her unprotected widowhood they would never have accepted her as their queen. Her sons must have been taught her superiority in rank to themselves; been accustomed from boyhood to regard her, if she survived, as the successor to their father before themselves, or they would have disputed her authority; the law and traditions must both have permitted the sovereign power to rest in the hands of a female, or all Israel would have risen up against it.

We are not now considering the subject in its political bearings as to whether such a system of monarchical succession be a wise one or not; but simply in a national view, as it marks the condition of woman in Israel, even at a period when national sin and civil bloodshed were desecrating the Holy Land of the Eternal, and the pure beautiful spirit of his Holy Law was concealed beneath the tempest clouds of bigotry and superstition on the one side, and of laxity and indifference on the other. Yet still, through the infinite mercy of God, shining forth upon some faithful hearts in the ranks of both.

The summing up of Alexandra's character and administration by Josephus, is one of the most extraordinary specimens of historical contradiction man ever compiled; we subjoin it in a note* for the perusal of our readers, assuring them that if they

* "A woman she was, who showed no signs of the weakness of her sex, for she was sagacious to the greatest degree in her ambition of governing." So far, leaving out ambition, he is correct, but here follows a most incomprehensible sentence: "She demonstrated by her doings at once, that her mind was fit for action; and that sometimes men themselves show the little understanding they have, by the frequent mistakes they make in forms of government; for she always preferred the present to futurity, and preferred the power of an imperious dominion of all things; and in comparison of that, had no regard to what was good, or what was right. However, she brought the affairs of her house to such an unfortunate condition, that she was the occasion of the taking away that authority from it; and that in no long time afterward, which she had obtained by a vast number of hazards and misfortunes. [What were they? Her husband's will!] And this out of a desire which does not belong to woman, and all by her compliance with those who bare ill-will to her family, and by leaving the administration destitute of a proper sup-

can come to a satisfactory conclusion as to its real meaning, we shall feel really obliged to them, if they will impart it for our especial benefit. Meanwhile, we will take leave, very humbly, to differ from the reverend historian, and regard her reign and character in a light which strikes us as doing the most justice to its subject. In the first place, Josephus talks of her "ambition of governing," her obtaining the crown through hazards and misfortunes, and all out of a desire which does not belong to a woman; and we can discover nothing of the kind. She came to her husband weeping and lamenting the desolation which would be hers on his death. Surely if she had ambition (a desire which we quite agree with Josephus does not belong to a woman), then was the time to display it, and urge her husband to take measures for her succession. She was not the first wife to whom the crown had been left, though the only one permitted to reign; but that there was a precedent in the annals of her country, permitted her surely to regard her right to the throne merely as a matter of course. Then, again, the "hazards and misfortunes," which he tells us she risked to gratify her desire of imperious dominion, what were they? Simple and exact obedience to a husband's dying counsel, his will confirmed, and her accession not even disputed, or occasioning a dissenting murmur. We can discover no trace whatever of her neglecting the "right" and "good" to increase a despotic power; and we rather think Josephus himself would find it difficult to prove it from *his own account* of her. Her preferring present peace and prosperity, and seeking to confirm such blessings to her people, surely cannot be deemed a fault; and how the miseries that followed her death can be imputed to her, as the historian so sapiently seeks to prove, passes our poor comprehension. Let us suppose a moment that she had not succeeded her husband, and the crown had descended, as in the right line of succession it must, to Hyrcanus, Alexander's elder son. What would have followed? exactly the same evils as took place after Alexandra's death; the quarrels of the

port of great men; and indeed, her management during her administration, while yet alive, was such as filled the palace after her death with calamities and disturbances. *However, though this had been her manner of governing, she preserved the nation in peace.*" Most extraordinary how she could, if so many errors of character and government could be laid to her charge!—See Josephus, vol. ii. p. 397.

brothers, each supported by a powerful party, and final appeal and subjection to Rome. The national sins and departure from the Eternal, by amalgamation with foreign powers, were rapidly advancing, Israel was hurrying forward his own fearful destiny in exact accordance with the prophecies of God. He was not only sinning against God sins by which no one was injured but himself; but darkly, fearfully, terribly against his *brother man*. The sins of Aristobulus the first, against his mother and brother, were, unhappily, neither without precedent nor repetition. They were but the preface to others quite as horrible and more extended. The nation was rapidly approaching that fearful state pictured by the prophet when the Lord bade him, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert and be healed;" meaning, that the sins of the people were such, that they had turned away the mercy of God from them; and, refusing to bestow on them the softening spirit of repentance and amendment, because they neither prayed for nor sought it, he left them to their own impenitent and sinful inclinations; and, in consequence, they hurried on their own awful destiny—the destruction of their Temple and city, the desolation of their land, and their dispersion over the whole world. And this fearful state of things had already commenced. The reign of Alexandra, instead of her mal-administration, causing the "calamities and disturbances" of which Josephus so unjustly accuses her, actually *averted* the tempest for nine years. The Bible gives us more than one instance of the judgment of the Lord being turned aside for a certain period, even though it may not eventually be averted. The reign of Alexandra appears to us one of these breathing times; obtained History tells us not how; but (reasoning, as the earnest study of God's holy Word would bid us reason) it was permitted through His infinite mercy from the intercession of those few noble and trusting hearts, still faithful to Himself. How know we that Alexandra herself might not have been one of these? The scanty and contradictory records of the time will not permit our upholding such an idea as proven truth; but it is more accordant with the history of her administration and its issue than the charge of Josephus, "that the miseries which followed were attributable to her." Where were the great men whose assistance, we are to

suppose from Josephus, she neglected? In placing part of the home administration in the hands of those who had borne ill-will to her family, we can simply trace the loving obedience of a faithful wife to her husband's dying counsel; and her own anxious desire to secure the welfare of her people, even by the sacrifice of her prejudices. Surely such a course of acting is the wisdom of a sovereign. The conquest of our own prejudices, the acting exactly contrary to one's own will, is not less difficult for a monarch than for ourselves; nor less meritorious when achieved. Why then refuse her the admiration which, in this instance, is certainly her due? Yet, with all this unjust censure, and charges which have no solid foundation, Josephus allows, "that she showed no weakness of her sex, was sagacious in the greatest degree in the power of governing, and preserved the nation in peace." Now how could she possibly be sagacious in the power of governing, if her mal-administration were the cause of all her country's after misery? How could she have neglected all that was right and good if, in such fearful times, she had yet preserved the nation in peace? a measure which no *male* sovereign had yet been able to accomplish. Surely we must all feel that such contradictory assertions are of very little worth? and our best means of coming to a just conclusion is to ponder, not on what followed or came before, but simply on *what she did*, and on the *age in which she lived.*

To our own feelings, tinctured perhaps as they are with national warmth, Alexandra appears far more worthy to occupy a place in the annals of female sovereigns, than many who have found eager hearts and talented pens, to bring them forward. She achieved no great victories, it is true—she enlarged not the boundaries of her kingdom. We read of no dazzling connexions with foreign potentates, which, though throwing a lustre over the pages of history, were incompatible with that obedience to the Law which was to make Judea a land "holy unto the Lord." Like a true woman, on whom the calm, sober wisdom of maturity has descended, she preferred *peace* to conquest; and she obtained it.

It is an idle sophistry to attempt lessening the dignity and firmness of her character, by the assertion, that the peace of the kingdom was owing to the supreme power having been placed in the hands of the Pharisees. Her wisdom manifested itself in the very bestowal of this power, and in yet so retaining her own

independence as to be in power, as well as in name, the head of the state—in so acting, so counselling, that the Pharisees must have felt that all they did, though in strict accordance with their own sentiments, was in reality mere *obedience to their sovereign.* This consciousness it must have been, which compelled their appeal to her on her death-bed. "It was absurd for them to take counsel by themselves while she was yet alive." Are these the words of men in whose hands was the whole power of the kingdom, so that the regal dignity was a mere cypher? No—though it was a woman who swayed the Jewish sceptre, a woman who sat upon the Jewish throne, and placed there by the suffrages of a whole nation, obeying and acknowledging tradition as well as scripture—the sovereign dignity was never more nobly held. Man could scarcely have so triumphed over the age. His desire for absolute power, his ambition, restlessness, and his ungovernable pride, all would have made him regard concession as humiliation. The delicate manœuvres of leading, when the most trifling error would bring disaster—of commanding and enforcing obedience when we must otherwise obey—of retaining in subjection wills which the weight of a feather may turn to the overbalancing our own—these are politics too delicate for man, and not attainable to ordinary women.

But Alexandra was no ordinary woman. She united the masculine energy, the grasping intellect of man, to the delicate tact of her own sex; and, by the combination, exalted her sovereign power, and so triumphed over the difficulties of the age, that well is she deserving of the love and veneration of her descendants,—well worthy of her own glorious descent.

It is greatly to be regretted, that in the records of historical personages, so little is given us of their domestic life. Too often history, though accurate, is the mere *surface* of things, and Truth we are told lies at the bottom of a well, not on its frothy surface. We ought, therefore, to accustom ourselves to *search deeply* for it, not to be content with receiving it merely *second hand.* Now, Truth is often elicited, by using not only our *intellectual* but our *imaginative* capacities. The first permits us to examine and compare; to reflect and condense; and to exclude the peculiar prejudices of the author whom we read, and looking steadily on the bare fact, trace its *causes* and its *end.* And yet we shall not find this exercise of the intellect or reflective power, perfectly satisfactory, unless we can combine and unite all those

distinct and separate thoughts into one perfect whole by the power of imagination, or creation. We are aware that imagination has been called a dangerous gift, as leading to folly and romance. Unite it with RELIGION and INTELLECT, REASON and TRUTH, and bless God for its bestowal, either on your children or yourselves! It will penetrate the imperfect records of the PAST. It will look calmly on the contending storms and dark pictures of the PRESENT, for through them it will trace the same calmly guiding hand, working the progression of mankind, to be visible only when the PRESENT becomes the PAST; and piercing the impenetrable folds of the FUTURE, become almost a prophet in its pure faith of things which will be, human and divine. But deprive imagination of these glorious guardians—Religion, Intellect, Reason, and Truth—and then, indeed, exorcise it as you would a fiend!

Now, though history tells us nothing of Alexandra's domestic character, the exercise of Reason and Imagination may fill up the vacuum, and give us the information that we need. Let it be remembered, she was sixty-four when called upon to occupy a public station. Would her sons have submitted to her authority, even if the customs of the country authorized her succession, unless accustomed to that reverence and obedience, which, if rendered to and deserved by a mother in Israel, as the law of God commanded, might easily be transferred from a mother to a sovereign? Josephus puts words in the mouth of Aristobulus which, as they are in direct contradiction to the will of his father, we do not believe he ever said; or if he did, it is proved they were the mere impulse of momentary passion, by their having no effect in turning even his own party from their allegiance.* Had it been mere ambition which placed his mother on the throne, as he dared to charge her, his was not the spirit to have submitted quietly. No; in the very postponement of his restless intrigues till her death, we read what power she must have exercised over him, both as his mother and his sovereign.

As there is no mention of Alexandra during the lifetime of her husband, the qualities she afterwards displayed must all have been cherished, cultivated, exercised in her *domestic sphere;* and in the respective duties of *wife* and *mother*. To the WOMEN in Israel was always intrusted the solemn responsibility of the

* Josephus' Histor. Antiq., book xiii. chap. 14.

education of MEN. We have already expressed our own conviction that mothers were associated with the fathers in the religious instruction of their sons (see 2d Period, chap. ii. p. 155); and innumerable precepts, in the valuable writings of our venerable fathers,* confirm this so strongly that no doubts can be entertained of their individual and social capabilities for the task; or of the consideration and reverence in which, as the accomplishers of such a mission, they must have been regarded by their countrymen. Again, we repeat, we are no longer writing of *Bible* times; but of Judaism nearing the advent of Christianity —that very epoch when it is stated that Judaism had so fallen from the institution of the Eternal, that it was to pass away from Earth and give place to a new and reforming creed. With regard to woman's position we see this charge is wholly false. The writers of the Talmud wrote of woman, her solemn mission, duties, and responsibilities, as the law of God commanded, and as they witnessed. And how could the education of the men of Israel have been intrusted to her, had she not been universally, and from the very first, recognised as mentally and spiritually on a perfect equality with man?

Having received their education, not only as boys, but in early manhood, from their mother, it was far more natural that Hyrcanus and Aristobulus should quietly yield allegiance to her as their sovereign, than by demanding the regal authority during her lifetime, sink her to a lower grade, and compel her submission to themselves. The exquisite beauty of the laws of Israel, guiding the conduct of children to their parents, would have been insulted by such proceedings. We can scarcely fail to be struck by their practical illustration of the law in the very customs of the country, that the wife of a *deceased* sovereign should reign before his sons. If she could educate them for the duties of a sovereign, she was certainly capable of governing in her own person; and this, then, reveals the secret of her wise administration. Whether or not a wife should outlive her husband could only be known to God. The minds of the daughters and wives of royalty could never be cultivated only in the expectation of succeeding to the throne. No such

* For this and other allusions henceforward to the Talmudic writings, the author is indebted to the valuable and kindly imparted information of a gentleman well known by the initials T. T.

ambition could have tarnished the lustre of the studies they pursued, or the acquirements they attained. They studied, thought, practised, that example as well as precept might aid them in their glorious task. Not for their own spiritual and temporal aggrandizement, but for their sons. In Israel it was not enough for mothers simply to give birth to men: it was theirs to train and to create them! How different, how gloriously superior to the system of a contemporary nation,* where the boy was taken from his mother's arms at the tender age of seven, and deemed effeminate and weak if he ever sought her company again!

Minds accustomed to such exercise (for the education of men could be no light and merely feminine task), were of course capable of individual energy and exertion when called upon to make such qualities manifest. Alexandra had exerted energy too long and nobly in her domestic and maternal duties, during her youth, for it to desert her in her age. There was no need for preparation to perform the monarchical duties; for, in preparing her sons for such destiny, she had prepared herself. That her sons did not reflect back her noble qualities, and failed alike in the unambitious patriotism and anxiety for her people's happiness which she so earnestly displayed, cannot and may not be traced to a defect in education. Very seldom is it that a mother's anxious work is so rewarded that her sons are exactly what she has prayed and striven that they should be. It is not the fault of the trainer but of the trained; the assumption of individual character, the budding forth of individual sin, which not the tenderest, the most careful education can ever entirely disperse. It will do much, very much; and, though it may not expect always to be rewarded upon earth, it is never wholly useless. How know we what the evil might have been, had we not sought at least in part to subdue it? The characters of Hyrcanus and Aristobulus might have been very different had they lived in other times; but, in a period of such terrible social iniquity, the forbearance practised by Aristobulus alike towards his mother and brother in her lifetime, is sufficient confirmation that, however she may have failed in making them all she wished for their *country*, she had at least impressed them with the strongest reverence and submission towards *herself*. In

* Sparta.

happier times the character of both brothers might have shone forth with untarnished lustre; as it was, they mingled with and were lost in the fearful vortex of the age. The nation was hastening on its own annihilation, and their unfortunate dispute, and its consequent reference to Pompey, hurried on the end.

We have lingered on the character of Alexandra, because it is a most important one, as concerns us nationally; although, perhaps, as women in general, we may derive less instruction from it than from others. The characters of history, however, cannot be to us like the characters of the Bible. We are no longer perusing inspired records, where example as well as precept can breathe the voice of God. Our aim now can be only a national one. To throw together every notice of the Hebrew women our history will present, which will prove their social and domestic positions, their mental capabilities, their responsibilities: all which will convince us that ancient and modern Judaism is the same. There is *not* the division which the caviller or the ignorant have raised up between them. Let us not then be charged with a change in our style and subject if the present notices read more like historical memoirs than the home-speaking essays of the characters of Scripture. We leave to our Seventh and last period the conclusions to which the history of our Sixth will lead us—the moral and religious lesson which, even from History and its imperfectly sketched personages, may still be learned. Even did it give us no other mention of woman than the wife of Jannæus, we should possess enough to satisfy us, that we need no other than our own religion for our earthly elevation and our spiritual hope.

CHAPTER VI.

MARIAMNE.

The Idumæan dynasty was on the ascendant, the Asmonæan on the decline; yet the people still turned to the remaining

scions of their native princes, with such constancy and affection, that Herod, though politically triumphant, felt that his claim to Judea would not be recognised by the multitudes, unless he associated with him one whose pure Asmonæan blood, enhanced by her engaging youth and extraordinary beauty, would win for him yet more strongly than his own power, the suffrages of the whole people of Judea.

In the person of the hapless Mariamne was represented, not the Asmonæan line alone, but the claims of both brothers, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus. Alexander, the son of the latter, married Alexandra, the daughter of the former: and their children, in consequence, inherited the claims and right of both. But this was no longer the age for legal succession, or the recognition of native sovereigns. The people indeed still clung to the laws and prejudices of their fathers; and still loved the descendants of those valiant men who had once saved them from oppression—but Judea was no longer a kingdom—the Jews no longer a people. The divisions between brother and brother had opened a path to the all-conquering Romans. The line of David, in whom alone the promised monarchy could be restored, had long since passed away: and in this period of Jewish history, between the return from Babylon and the final captivity, we can but trace the gradual yet certain advancement in national iniquity, prophesied by Moses and every other ulterior prophet; when, notwithstanding the faithful obedience, spirituality, and love of individuals (ten, perhaps, in every thousand), God could not withdraw His avenging arm—leaving to that other and brighter world, in His presence, to distinguish "between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth Him not."

The most powerful impetus to this progression in iniquity, originated in too close a connexion, and too blind an attachment in Hyrcanus, for Antipater, an Idumæan by birth, and a Jew by adoption and semblance. Idumæa had only lately been united to Judea, and its inhabitants, by the representation of John Hyrcanus the first, won over as proselytes to Judaism. The family of Antipater, therefore, were *not* Hebrews. Herod, entitled the last king of the Jews, had no *national* right to the title: for he was a stranger and, by his actions, a very doubtful proselyte. There was, indeed, evil enough in Israel before the ascendency of the Idumæan family; but not that utter disregard

to nationality, that complete blending with Rome, that intimate association and adoption of its peculiar characteristics, as in the reign of Herod; whose insidious policy to lessen Jewish nationality—that no allegiance to the King of Heaven might interfere with the acknowledgment of his kingdom upon earth—opened the wide gate of utter destruction for his hapless people. The web of misery flung by Vespasian and Titus over the miserable Jews, Herod's own hand originally wove.

The gallant son of Aristobulus, Alexander, had been murdered; and his widow and orphan children found protection with the powerful friend of Hyrcanus, the Idumæan Herod; whose father, Antipater, had fallen a victim to the hatred of the Jewish faction. Herod appears to have regarded Alexandra and her children only as the near relations of Hyrcanus, whose party he always pretended to befriend. As the widow and children of Alexander, the son of Aristobulus, whose claims and struggles for independent sovereignty the Idumæans had always so powerfully and perseveringly resisted, we might suppose they would be objects rather of enmity than of protection. Affection for the person, and gratitude for the favors of Hyrcanus, there could have been none in the hearts of either Antipater or Herod; they supported him simply because his indolent and confiding disposition placed all the actual power in their hands. With Aristobulus they knew this could not be; for he was, according to Josephus, "an active man, and one of a great and generous soul;" and the only means to *increase* their own power, they felt, was to *decrease* his. When, however, Aristobulus and Alexander were both murdered, and the sole representative of that younger Asmonæan branch (except the children of Alexander) was Antigonus, who, notwithstanding his casual bravery and occasional success, appears to have possessed but little of the Asmonæan spirit, it became an act of policy to unite himself with the youthful representatives of both the brothers;—and Herod acted accordingly.

Mariamne could not have been, at this time, much above fourteen or fifteen years old, that is, granting she was the senior of her brother Aristobulus, who, four years afterwards, is said to have only just completed his seventeenth year. The fierce and jealous passion which afterwards characterized Herod towards his young wife, does not appear to have been excited at the time of their betrothal. He might have been attracted by her exceeding beauty; but the character of the man allows

the supposition, that at that period, when all his ambition was to aggrandize and secure his own power for the future, as well as for the present, he would equally have made this connexion had the grand-daughter of Aristobulus and Hyrcanus been as ugly as sin, instead of lovely as virtue and innocence could make her. Happy indeed would it have been for her, had she not been thus lovely, and the connexion remained one of policy alone!

At the time of their betrothal, Mariamne knew little of Herod, save as one of the most gallant, most enterprising men of the day. She had been educated in perfect seclusion with her brother; kept apart, as much as possible, from the fearful confusions and crimes of the state; and though she had not as yet been called upon to put away the thoughts and habits of youth, and come forward in all the early maturity of Eastern womanhood,—still it is not unlikely that she was willing and contented to receive Herod as her destined husband. He could be as winning, as attractive, and as gentle, as he could also be terrible in severity and rage. We read enough of his taste for the arts, his expansive intellect, the magnificent scale of his architectural, and other civil improvements, to believe that he was not solely the monster of passion and cruelty which his later deeds pronounce him. His very intercourse with the luxurious Romans may have added a manly polish and graceful manner to the stern reserve of a Jewish warrior; and these were not qualities to pass unnoticed in that day. Mariamne supposed him the friend and protector of her grandfather and mother; and if he did seek at that time to win her affections, it was most likely she could bestow them willingly, and without repugnance consider herself as his bride.

They were not, however, then together long enough, for that scarcely conscious preference to become real affection.

Awakened to a closely threatening danger, Herod fled with his family, including Mariamne as his bride, her mother, and brother to Masada, a strong fortress on the western shores of the Dead Sea, and near his paternal heritage, Idumæa. The journey was fatiguing, and so dangerous that Herod, in despair, had nearly attempted his own life; but his *temporal* good fortune did not desert him: he reached the fortress in safety, and was speedily reinforced by 800 native troops from Idumæa, under the command of his brother Joseph. This is the first

mention history gives of Mariamne. Antigonus, whose connexion with the Parthians occasioned this sudden flight, never appeared to remember even the existence of his brother's children; and however the intriguing and ambitious Alexandra might have secretly hated the power of her son-in-law Herod, there was no eluding it, save by making it her own.

Four years elapsed ere Mariamne became the wife of Herod, and during that period her domestic life must have been far from happy. In fact, from her first connexion with Herod, we may say her sorrows began; for their rapid flight to Masada, pursued so closely by the Parthian allies of Antigonus as repeatedly to meet in deadly fight, and encounter such dangers that Herod's own spirit quailed almost to despair, could have been but an interval of fearful terror, fatigue, and suffering to the young girl only just commencing life. If her affections had indeed been excited by Herod, the length of his absence, the dangers to which he was exposed, all must have weighed depressingly on a mind too young by many years for such heavy cares.

Alexandra and her children were not the only companions of Herod's hasty flight. He took with him his own mother Cypros, and his sister Salome; and it was at Masada, in consequence, that that fearful enmity between the female members of his family commenced, which was to dash his whole domestic life with woe. The extreme youth and purity of Mariamne permits us the supposition, that, at the time, she herself had little to do with the bickerings and petty provocations continually passing before her. But her position was a painful and a dangerous one; she had not one female friend who could be the guardian and guide which her youth and beauty so much needed. The character of her mother, as we see it afterwards revealed, was far more likely to infuse its own baleful influences within the young mind and heart, in such perfect innocence looking up to her, than to strengthen and ennoble Mariamne's natural high qualities. Yet, how was her child to discover this? How mistrust, and so turn from her only parent, nay, with the sole exception of her young brother, her only relative upon earth? Alexandra had intellect, policy, and wisdom, crooked as it was; and the reverence and love uniting the sons and daughters of Israel with their parents, must effectually have prevented Mariamne, at her tender age, from discovering aught

which could frighten her from her mother's guardianship. How could she doubt the purity of her mother's love? How divide the true from the false? the judicious from the wary? A judicious parent would have taught and practised moderation and forbearance; would, if she had seen the necessity of uniting the pure high Asmonæan race with the degraded Idumæan, have bent at least to the necessity, and conciliated the family of her daughter's husband herself, and led her child to do so too. But this, to a character such as Alexandra, was impossible; her very subtlety in this instance succumbed to her overbearing pride. The pure and beautiful spirit, which, guiding the law of Moses, inspired the prophet to promise, in the name of the Lord, a place dearer than sons and daughters to the strangers who, turning from idolatry to Him, kept his covenants and sabbaths, had been lost in the dense cloud of sin and misery enveloping Judea. Pride had folded up the Jewish heart, instead of the lucid robe of charity, which the law commanded and infused; and from the insufferable haughtiness of Alexandra, we may trace all the misery which ended not even with the murder of her child.

To any disposition, the pride and haughty insolence of another occasion a bitterness of feeling, a desire of retaliation, only to be conquered by a consciousness of one's position before God and our own souls, and of the absolute nothing which such provocations are, in our strivings after eternity. But to feel thus needs an enlightened, a lowly, yet a noble mind; and not such was the disposition of either Salome or her mother. Of the latter, however, we read so little, except in conjunction with Salome, that we rather suppose her weak than wicked; too indolent herself to conspire against another; but willing enough to follow where a more energetic spirit would lead; and, in consequence, an equal accessary to evil deeds. To Salome, however, no negative terms need be applied; and the only relief we can discover in the perusal of her history, is that she was no woman of Israel. Even in that awful period of sin, the daughters of Israel had not thus fallen. Alexandra, indeed, was evil enough; but for her a train of fearful circumstances, a succession of misfortunes from treachery and cruelty, may be some palliation. In her, some womanly feelings once had existence; in Salome there were none. The petty vices and faults of woman were indeed the *foundation* of all her after-crimes;

but in the overspreading poisoning torrent of her thoughts and deeds, we can scarcely believe that its source lay in those small and often invisible springs of petty faults dwelling in every woman's breast.

The extreme beauty of her brother's bride would by such a disposition have been looked on as an unpardonable crime. Even ordinary attractions must have sunk to nothing, before the sweet innocence and freshness of such loveliness as Mariamne's. Her pure Asmonæan blood, her lineage from a thousand priests, the ordained of God, and reverenced of His people, all was felt as a reproach to the haughty Idumæan, who, exalt herself as she might, could never boast such proud descent; and when to these sources of irritation were added the scorn and contempt of Mariamne's mother, and the daily provocations thence ensuing, heightened perhaps by the lofty bearing of the object of her hate herself, all recurring through successive weeks, months, and years, whilst they were thrown together in one home, which they dared not quit, because of the dangers awaiting them without, and with no possibility at that period of evincing the hate consuming her, it became concentrated, defined, laid out in varied schemes, waiting but the opportunity to work, which, when it came, transformed her from the woman to the fiend.

That she imparted her machinations to her mother at that time is not likely. She was probably contented with infusing such hatred of Alexandra and her daughter, as would secure her a willing agent in Cypros whenever she needed one. Provocations which the weak character of Cypros might have been too indolent even to remember, were recalled and magnified, till the sting of their recollection so rankled, that even time could not remove it, and from them hatred sprang. Weak characters are quite as susceptible of the passions as strong ones; perhaps even more, for the latter can be guided by reason, the former cannot.

Amongst characters like these was the hapless Mariamne thrown without the power of escape, for those three or four years of her young existence, when the influences and impressions should be but virtue's own. At fourteen or fifteen what could she have known of life, except as imparted by her mother, her sole instructress? And in those three years' residence in Masada, what opportunity had she to weaken the maternal influence, by presenting to her notice such noble and high specimens of her

sex, as would cause her awakening mind to doubt and question, and without lessening the affection and duty of a child, yet bid her shrink from qualities and propensities which she could not love? Who was there to lead her to the pure unsullied fount of woman's virtue, and bid her to conquer the trifling faults of her misguided education, so that not even hatred could fling its dart upon her, but enmity itself fall powerless, not from the utter absence of cause, for, alas! when did that ever quench hatred, but of opportunity for its display?

Such a guide she had not; and we can only marvel that under such influences, such impressions, it is only "haughtiness," and a "want of moderation," of which the historian can accuse her. That she should have treated both Cypros and Salome with some haughtiness was only natural. Her mother's conduct must have guided hers; and the visible dislike with which she was regarded by the Idumæans, could but have fallen coldly and painfully on the eager heart of youth. In those three years, her brother was the being to whom, in all probability, Mariamne clung with all the warm passionate emotions of her Eastern nature. Nearly the same age, equally lovely, equally gifted, the affections of the young Asmonæans became concentrated in each other. It was not to Alexandra, much as no doubt they loved her, that her children could reveal all the gushing tide of feeling, hope, joy, and awakening intellect which so characterizes and blesses youth. The character which a careful study of the history marks as Alexandra's, could not have bent down to the freshness and artlessness of her children's. Wrapt in her own cares, for undoubtedly she had many, and sad ones—her own vindictive feelings towards the family of her son-in-law—the present and the future glooming darkly and terribly over her and hers—her aged father in the hands of his enemy, Antigonus, who, though his own nephew, scrupled not to deprive him for ever of the capacity for the high priesthood, by the mutilation of his ears—Masada itself continually liable to attack and seizure—and the safety of herself and children continually in jeopardy, for Antigonus was not likely to forget, if they were once in his power, that the youthful Aristobulus, as the son of his elder brother Alexander, had more claim to the sovereignty than himself. These were thoughts, all sufficient to render even a gentle and amiable character too sadly anxious to enter into the hopeful buoyancy of youth.

Alexandra's haughty and intriguing spirit would bury it all deep in her own breast, and coldness, indifference, and pride mark her outward demeanor. Under such circumstances, the love between Mariamne and Aristobulus could not fail to grow stronger, more sustaining, and more consoling, with every passing year. No affection is purer, stronger, more enduring, and lovely in its truth, than that subsisting between a brother and sister, when it *does* exist; perhaps it is even stronger when the sister is by one or two years the elder. It makes them more *twin* in age, capabilities, mutual appreciation, and comprehension of each other, than had the boy the advance in years. It is a distinct, wholly distinct feeling, to that which actuates sister towards sister. There, pure and beautiful as such affection is, it is wholly *feminine*. In the other case, the highest and noblest qualities of the brother insensibly infuse themselves into the sister, banishing in consequence all those petty failings and weaknesses which are natural to woman; and all the sister's purest, most spiritual, and unselfish influences, infuse themselves by the same process into the heart of the brother, and purifying it from its grosser and more worldly nature, make each more worthy, and more capable of entering into the other's feelings, and so twine them together, with a link strong as adamant, and pure as the crystal fount of love, whence all such affection comes. But this is no common emotion, or always existing when a sister and brother are of so near an age. Character and circumstance may both unite to *prevent* as well as to *create* it. Between Mariamne and Aristobulus, an earnest study of their characters and destiny seems to prove convincingly that it *had* existence. They had none other with whom to divide it; not even separated by education, or by Aristobulus being called to war, or to the Priesthood, as might have been the case had their country been at peace, and the young scions of royalty occupying their natural position in their father's court. They shared one common danger, one common lot—were mutually the darlings of their people—mutually the objects of dread and hate to the opposing factions—mutually of consequence to Herod, whose ambition he knew would have no firm foundation, unless secured through them; all this combined to unite the natural links of affection (which assimilating characters had already so closely bound) with such strength and firmness, that their violent severing was

in all probability the first and final cause of Mariamne's estrangement from her husband. Could it be otherwise?

We have lingered some time on this residence at Masada, which historians in general pass over in five or six lines, being too intent upon the manœuvres and actions of Herod, to examine deeper into the origin of those dark and terrible deeds which afterwards so devastated his own household. But the object of our consideration is Mariamne, and not Herod; and therefore, we are anxious, by reflection on the early years of her life, on the circumstances which influenced her maturer character, and in fact her destiny itself, to throw light on those darker portions of her history which in general are touched upon alone. In a perusal of the historians open to us, we find ourselves scarcely knowing whether to blame or pity, and certainly quite unable to form a correct estimate of Mariamne's character. Her fearful trials, her early provocations, the dark influences which prevented the complete correction of her few natural faults, all these, in the bare recital of events, are impossible to be discovered, without that attentive study of *causes* as well as of *events*, of the *origin* as well as of the *end*, which in a more rapid perusal of History is not possible to be attained. We have excused our prolixity before, by assuring our readers that our notices of individuals are far more suggestive than narrative, more essays than histories, and can only entreat them to bear with us still; the characters of History demanding the same treatment as those of the Bible, still inculcating a moral, though not the same inspired lesson.

The three years passed at Masada were not without frequent attacks from without, in addition to the annoyances within. The Parthian allies of Antigonus overran the country, and probably frequently threatened the fortress, though we do not hear of any direct siege till that under Antigonus himself, which appears to have lasted several months, and to have exposed the garrison and inmates to dreadful suffering, from the want of water. Meanwhile, Herod had arrived at Rome, and besought Augustus and Antony to confer the sovereignty of Judea on the young Aristobulus, who united in his own person the claims of both the contending sons of Alexander Jannæus, and grant him (Herod) the office of governor under him. The very nature of the request reveals the subtle policy of the man; no one can imagine there was any further sincerity

in his prosecution of Aristobulus' rightful claims, than the fear of grasping too much by the actual demand of the crown for himself, and so losing all. Besides, had he done so, he lost at once all the confidence of Alexandra; whereas, by making her son's claims apparently his first object, he riveted it on himself, as the only one likely to give her aid. That the Romans chose to confer the sovereignty on him instead of on Aristobulus, could not be attributed to any undue ambition on his part. That Alexandra was satisfied that he had at that time done all he could for her son, appears likely, from her making no effort for him herself until Herod's resolution to deny him any share in the government became more evident.

Seven days after his royal appointment, Herod left Rome, and three months afterwards was in Judea. Masada was of course his first object; the forces of Antigonus, aided by the want of water, had nearly reduced it, when a timely fall of heavy rain relieved the one, and Herod's impetuous attack removed the other. Mariamne had not, however, very long to renew her acquaintance with her betrothed husband. He appears only to have relieved Masada, and instantly departed with the intention of reducing Jerusalem; but was foiled by the treacherous desertion of his principal ally. Unable with his native forces to subdue Judea, he fixed his head quarters at Samaria, and by his vigilant and energetic measures, freed the province of Galilee from the bands of robbers with which it had been infested. The following year he recommenced measures against Antigonus; but it was not till the spring of the next year that the siege of Jerusalem was regularly begun. During the siege Herod returned to Samaria, to complete his marriage with Mariamne, two years after he had been made king by the Romans, and consequently nearly five since their first betrothal. Where Mariamne, her mother and brother, had been since the siege was raised from Masada, history does not reveal. We rather suppose that when Herod fixed his winter quarters at Samaria, all the females of his family joined him there. It appears strange that he did not solemnize his marriage then, instead of waiting to do so in the very midst of a most momentous siege. That ambition, not love, was the original incentive of his union with Mariamne, is proved at once by this proceeding. He feared that even the power of his arms would not have secured him the affections

of the people of Judea, or reconciled them to his conquest of Antigonus, only that he might ascend the Asmonæan throne himself; and that his obstacle should be lessened, if it could not be entirely removed, occasioned his sudden resolution to leave the walls of Jerusalem, and at once unite himself with the Asmonæan princess. Once really his wife, he probably felt no chances could divide them, and so give her influence to another. The people would second him for *her* sake; and out of regard to his queen, forget he was that Idumæan alien, whom so many detested, while they feared. The event proved the wisdom of his policy. At Samaria, the young and lovely Mariamne became indissolubly his wife, and many faithful partisans of her father instantly joined him with such reinforcements as enabled Herod to march with renewed spirit against Jerusalem. If Mariamne indeed loved Herod at that time, her life must have been a chaos of anxiety and fear. He never returned to remain with her, but left her again after a very brief interval, to encounter renewed dangers. Continually thrown amongst his relatives, whose envy and dislike were not likely to decrease now she was really his wife, she must, indeed, have rejoiced, when, after a protracted siege, Jerusalem submitted, and Herod was acknowledged sovereign of Judea.

His endeavors to preserve the city from the vengeance of the Romans, his protection of holy places, and care of the religious prejudices of the people, were all actions likely to elevate his character in the mind of his young bride. Antigonus had received his death-doom from the Romans, not from Herod. Compared with the awful iniquities of the time, his career had been unusually free from atrocity; and even the unsparing executions of the Antigonian faction, which followed his accession, his policy, no doubt, knew how to excuse, so as to appear actual necessity to his wife, and not the relentless cruelty which they seem to us.

For a few, a very few months, Mariamne may have enjoyed some degree of happiness and peace. The mass of the people, devotedly attached to the Asmonæan family, were stilled into some degree of submission, because she shared Herod's throne: but too soon even this transient calm was to pass away. Herod was sovereign of Judea, endured because of his connexion with the Asmonæan line; but even this connexion would not permit his assumption of the *priesthood*. He, an Idumæan, an alien

—but a "half Jew," as the people called him,—occupy that office of solemnity, the delegate of God himself! It was a thing unheard of, even in the most fearful annals of Jewish history, and impossible to be permitted. Herod always appeared aware of this; for at the commencement of his reign he made no attempt to assume it nominally, even though the measures he adopted, proved that he had resolved that all the actual power should be his own. Hyrcanus, the father of Alexandra, had been invited to Jerusalem, and treated with great apparent respect and regard by Herod, as the grandfather of his wife. The mutilation of his ears, however, disqualified him from again assuming the priesthood;* and neglecting not only the rightful heir to that solemn office, but many others of noble lineage and high qualities, in Jerusalem, Herod sent for Ananel, an obscure individual, but of priestly descent from the Babylonian Jews, and appointed him High Priest.

This was an insult impossible to be borne with patience, either by Alexandra or the Asmonæan faction. The office of High Priest had been hereditary, from Aaron downwards. The law had made no condition for the exclusion of rightful heirs, save that of being "without blemish." Youth was no preventive; and while the young Aristobulus lived, and united in his own person not only the claims of his priestly race, but of two contending parties, to appoint another to the priesthood was an insult to the whole nation, impossible to be overlooked. The people were in a turmoil of indignation, but too much awed by the severity and power of Herod to attempt any popular disturbance; but all the mother's feelings were roused to more than passive indignation. She wrote to Cleopatra, beseeching her influence with Antony, to compel Herod's appointment of her son. Aided by a musician, her letters were conveyed to the far-famed queen of Egypt, who complied with the request; but Antony, unwilling to interfere with the civil government of the king he had himself created, hesitated and procrastinated, without coming to any decision. Meanwhile Dellius, a man infamous for his licentious conduct, and the friend and confidant of Antony, visited Jerusalem. The extraordinary beauty of the brother and sister elicited his wondering admiration; and in his secret conferences with

* This proves how faithfully, even at this period, some of the laws of Moses were still obeyed. "The priests were to be without blemish." Levit. xxi. 17—24.

Alexandra, he persuaded her to have their pictures taken, and sent to Antony, who would then be unable to refuse anything they asked. The horrible nature of this proposal would, we ought to imagine, have been rejected by a Jewish mother with indignation and abhorrence; but, worked on by her ambitious and intriguing spirit, even these revolting means were adopted, and the picture sent: and to this woman had the tender years of Mariamne been intrusted! From a mind capable of such black, such unnatural horror, had the pure chaste mind of youth received its first impressions: and, knowing this, shall we not almost marvel at the stainless, shadowless purity, encircling the daughter of such a mother, almost like a halo, rendering her impalpable, and so transmitting every baleful arrow aimed against her, as would the atmosphere itself!

The honor of Mariamne was, however, in this instance, safer with Antony than with Alexandra. The fiendish counsels of Dellius only prevailed upon him to send for Aristobulus; but Herod refused to obey, encouraged by the clause in Antony's letter, not to send the young man, "if he thought it hard upon him so to do." And no resentment followed. Aristobulus himself interfered not with the machinations working for and against him. His youth, his tastes, probably rendered him contented with the life of calm retirement which his exclusion from office permitted; but the love his sister bore him, her perfect consciousness of the rights and claims of her noble line, could not permit her to behold this indignity in silence. There is a calm dignity pervading the character of Mariamne, even in her youth, which almost unconsciously impresses us with a conviction of her own high sense of her priestly lineage, and its lofty claims, which no personal danger, no timid consideration, could ever remove. The daughters and wives of priestly lineage were looked upon by their countrymen, from the very first delivery of the law, as sharing the sanctity of their fathers and husbands, and reverenced accordingly, as higher in station according to popular decision, as purer and holier in conduct than the wives and daughters of sovereigns. We read but too often of royal unions with the daughters of the heathen; but never but once of such abomination occurring in the households of the priests. Pride of birth, of descent, was almost the first impression on the hearts of the young daughters of the priests; that they might preserve both unsullied. And Mariamne was not likely to for-

get this precious heritage. It was not in accordance with a descendant of the Asmonæans to regard herself as queen merely as the wife of Herod. By right of heritage the kingdom was her brother's and her own: and though the arms of the Romans had conferred the crown on Herod, how might she behold the exclusion of her brother from his own hereditary honors, which it was in the power of her husband to grant or to refuse?

Mariamne ceased not her entreaties and expostulations till her boon was granted; still not so much for his love of her, to which passion Josephus imputes most of Herod's actions concerning his wife's family, but because he felt that, once established as High Priest, Aristobulus would have no temptation to leave the country, but would always remain in his power, to be removed whenever his unscrupulous cruelty deemed fitting. Assembling his friends, he told them that "Alexandra had conspired against his authority, seeking, by the aid of Cleopatra, to elevate her son to his throne—a proceeding doubly unjust, *as it would deprive her daughter of the dignity she now had*, and would bring disturbances into the kingdom. He had, therefore, in his anxiety to retain it, resolved to give the youth the high priesthood; and that he had, in fact, only set up Ananel, because Aristobulus was so young a child."

We have marked one line of this politic speech in italics, because it appears to us so convincing, that Herod himself was aware that his principal hold, as sovereign of the Jews, on the people, was his union with Mariamne. The depriving her of the dignity she now enjoyed, would have been of very little moment to him individually, if he had not strongly felt that her dignity supported his, and if one were shaken, so would be the other.

The appointment of Aristobulus reconciled the people in a measure to their king, and, for a brief interval, quieted the intriguing Alexandra. She professed, with many tears, "that she had never sought the kingdom for her son, nor would she accept it were it offered; having that confidence in Herod's capability of governing as would secure the safety of the remainder of her family; that she was satisfied, nay, overcome, by Herod's benefits, and thankfully accepted the honor showed by him to her son, praying him to excuse her if *the nobility of her family, and the freedom of acting which that nobility*, she

thought, allowed her, had made her act too precipitately and imprudently on this matter."

Josephus, who, in his own person, was a great stickler for woman's inferiority, would certainly not have put such words in Alexandra's mouth, if they had no foundation in the customs and characteristics of the Jewish people. He must have known that *freedom of acting* was perfectly compatible with the Hebrew woman's social position, or she could not have alluded to, and sought to excuse it. Nor would Herod, as we shall see in the sequel, have deprived her of liberty, had he not feared that she would again use it, to the detriment of his interest. For a while peace seemed established between these two equally dark and equally opposing spirits. Mariamne saw her beloved brother in his rightful position; and rejoiced that one subject of contention was thus removed. Her mind was too pure, too upright, to harbor suspicion of those around her. How could she penetrate the secret thoughts and wishes of her husband, or believe that, in the very fulfilment of her anxious wish, her brother's death-warrant was, in the tyrant's inmost heart, already sealed? Glad to escape from the pressure of care and sorrow which had darkened her early years, Mariamne probably gave herself up to the delight of her domestic affections, unconscious of the brooding passions in her mother's heart, or their provocation by her husband.

Fearful that Alexandra would renew her plots and innovations, Herod desired that she should dwell in the palace, his subtle policy most likely concealing the real reason of this command, under the same show of reverence and honor with which he had welcomed Hyrcanus to the same dangerous precincts. But Alexandra's equally subtle penetration speedily discovered that her guard, appointed ostensibly in honor of her high rank, were creatures of Herod, restraining her liberty, and spies upon her most private hours, and most unguarded words. Burning with indignation she wrote to Cleopatra, beseeching her assistance and advice, declaring that she would undergo anything, rather than continue to live in this state of slavery. The very indignation which it causes her, proves how little accustomed were the women of Israel to the faintest semblance of restraint.

Cleopatra, who appears always to have befriended Alexandra

(another proof in what light the Jewish female aristocracy were regarded by foreign nations), advised her to escape with her son into Egypt, where she promised them protection. Alexandra eagerly assented. She ordered two coffins to be made, as for two dead bodies. In these she intended to conceal herself and her son, desiring her servants, whom she could trust, to convey them away in the night time, and bear them to the sea-shore, where a ship would be waiting to take them to Egypt. The scheme promised fair, but was defeated, by its being spoken of to Sabion, one of her friends, under the impression that he was already in her confidence. This Sabion, believing its discovery would insure him favor, betrayed it to the king. Herod permitted the plan to go on, that he might be assured of its existence, and discovered the whole at the very moment Alexandra believed its success complete. Still no outward evidence of his anger appeared. He stood in too much dread of Cleopatra's influence with Antony, if exerted against himself, to adopt harsh measures against Alexandra. With every manifestation of generosity and kindness, more than likely to inspire the gratitude and affection of his young wife, he overlooked the offence; but his unhappy victim was marked for removal. It seems strange that Herod did not seek the destruction of Alexandra in the young man's stead, for there was nothing in his dawning character to arouse a tyrant's dread, except, indeed, those lofty virtues and outward attractions, which might mark him as a dangerous rival to the wily Idumæan. Still, though resolved in his diabolical purpose, he waited, lest a too summary removal might work against himself.

CHAPTER VII.

MARIAMNE (CONTINUED).

THE Feast of Tabernacles neared, and the whole population of Judæa flocked, in exact accordance with the Law, to Jeru

salem. Festivity reigned throughout the city—the land was at rest from foreign oppressors—the spirit of faction itself seemed stilled—from palace to hut all was solemn rejoicing and light-hearted merriment. On the holy days of convocation, the immense areas and courts of the temple were thronged with the dense multitudes, eager to receive the high priest's triennial blessing. And there he stood, the youthful descendant of a thousand priests, and warriors, and kings, in the first bloom of graceful youth, clothed in the magnificent vestments of the solemn office, majestic in his bearing, so unusually tall and finely proportioned, in his still boyish figure—his beautiful countenance, so radiant with the holy thoughts and feelings which his task called forth, that, as the multitudes gazed upon him standing at the high altar, gracefully and collectedly performing his priestly duties, themselves never witnessed (from their peculiar sanctity and holy associations) without emotion, enthusiasm, even at that holy moment, could not be restrained. Tears burst forth from young and old—the warrior, even as the woman, wept, thrilled to the very heart at the beauty, innocence, and sanctity he beheld, though himself unconscious why he wept. Tears, blessings, prayers, swelling at length into shouts of joyous greeting, betrayed the zeal and love which burst irrepressibly from every heart. What was the sovereign himself, though present, compared with the High Priest—their own, not only in himself, but in his glorious race and family, the traits of whom he bore upon his features? And if such were the emotions of the multitude, what feelings must have swelled the hearts of the mother and sister? However ill-regulated ambition, and its awful train of evil passions, had marred the heart and mind of Alexandra, in all things relating to Aristobulus she felt as an anxious and affectionate mother; and some of the purest emotions which she had ever experienced, must have been excited in thus beholding him. And to his fond sister, what delicious emotions of love and admiration, aye, and reverence, for she knew him worthy of the solemn office, must have heightened and hallowed the deep affection she had ever borne him, as the hand-in-hand companion of her childhood and youth! Each quivering blessing, each ringing shout, found echo in her heart.

Darkly and terribly in contrast with such emotions did the storm of jealous hate rage in the bosom of Herod. He

beheld, or fancied, in the popular enthusiasm, rebellion against himself; in the grace and beauty of a boy, greater danger to his power and himself, than he had ever encountered, or feared from a thousand warriors, or from the wisdom and policy of a hundred veterans. But though the internal tempest could only be stilled by the victim's blood, Herod dissembled, and joined with apparent sincerity in the public rejoicing.

The festival passed; the multitudes dispersed in quiet from the capital to their respective homes. A hush of peace, foreign and domestic, seemed to have sunk on the troubled land; and Alexandra and her young son returned to the former's palace at Jericho. There, after a brief interval, they were joined by Herod and some of his court, no doubt including Mariamne; and a period of feasting and royal amusements followed. All enmity against Aristobulus had apparently subsided. Herod treated the young man with a semblance of caressing fondness, only too likely to remove suspicion both from Mariamne and her brother. Alexandra herself seems at that time to have suspected nothing evil. The skies over their head, and the distant horizon, all were smiling in cloudless blue and glowing sunshine, when the bolt fell with a shock of horror as if indeed nature had thundered from her very smiling calm, and hurled a death-bolt from her sun-lit sky. The young prince had quitted the palace in company with the sovereign and their respective attendants; and wandered carelessly along the gardens and pastures, till they neared some spacious fishponds. The day was sultry, and many plunged into the refreshing waters, to indulge in the luxury (truly so, in the scorching East) of bathing. At first, the young prince had stood aloof, amused at the various manœuvres in the art of swimming, displayed by his attendants, but instigated by Herod to try his skill also, willingly joined them. Twilight was advancing, but still the sports continued, till from the closing darkness a wild cry resounded, and then a suffocating moan, and then a shout from many voices for "help, the prince was drowning;" but it came too late. The measures of the tyrant and his fiendish helpers had been too well taken, and the hapless youth was conveyed home to his distracted relatives a lifeless corpse, not three hours after he had quitted them, radiant in loveliness and life. A violent death is always fearful to the bereaved survivors, and how doubly aggravated when traced to relentless murder! The

actual cause of the young man's death must certainly have transpired, else Josephus, who generally tries to exonerate Herod, would not so decidedly have attributed this murder to him. As deep and universal as had been the love and sympathy which he had inspired at the altar, so deep and universal was the affliction at his loss; every family, to use the (in this instance) expressive words of the historian, "looking on this calamity, not as it belonged to another, but *that one of themselves was slain.*" How inexpressible, how harrowing, must then have been the agony of his mother and sister; and in the latter how awfully heightened, by the scarcely restrained voice of public indignation, pointing to her husband as his ruthless murderer! How many circumstances must, in those moments of agony, have returned to the heart of Mariamne, startlingly, appallingly convincing of the foundations for those rumors. Herod had in truth wept, in fearful agitation, as the body of the youth was exposed before him; but there are moments when the vision of the soul is clearer than heretofore—when human agony is such that semblances which successfully deceived before, cast down their robes of falsehood, and appear naked in their own hideousness—and so it probably was with Mariamne. Tears and agitation, which a moment of suffering might have so deceived, as to lead her to her husband's bosom for consolation, now spoke the language, not of grief for bereavement, but remorse and horror for the deed; revealed him not *mourner* but *murderer.* Where was she to turn in that deep agony? Her mother had concealed her utter desolation, her passionate cravings for revenge, under an exterior of such chilling despair, that how might she give comfort? He, whom she had loved longest and best on earth, aye, even better than her husband; for Herod's was not a character so to concentrate all affection in himself, that the silver links of natural affection had been dulled before it; her brother in blood, in love, in the proud glories of their ancient race and heritage, he lay in his cold grave; and dark suspicions filled her heart, that the only other being in the wide world whom her young spirit could have loved, was that brother's murderer! What to her were the magnificent honors which were lavished on his senseless remains, but as a mockery to the dead, and triumph to the living, that the last obstacle to his ambition was removed? If thus it was considered even by the fickle

multitude, whose opinion magnificence and show generally guide where a sovereign wills, can we doubt that it was thus considered by the bereaved and agonized sister, to whom the private character of Herod must have been more unguardedly displayed? She had been too young, too innocent, too confiding to become aware of it before; but when awakened by a flash of agony like this, how might the confidence, the guileless trust of *youth* return? She had lived little more than twenty years; but she was now ALONE, and in that word dwells AGE.

Mariamne's deep affliction was visible only in her change of bearing towards her husband, and the mournful ageing of individual character. But Alexandra's anguish could have no rest, no peace, till lost in the wild wish and matured measures for revenge. Till reason regained ascendency, her agony was such, that suicide seemed the only relief; but then came the desire to live, even to prolong life, till vengeance was accomplished: and so to prolong life demanded all possible care, by neither word nor act, to offend Herod, whose unscrupulous cruelty would not spare her, more than her son. To deceive him, therefore, was that semblance of belief in his professed grief assumed, which must so have chilled the heart of her daughter—an apparent satisfaction from the honors awarded to her boy in death—an impenetrable concealment of every suspicion that murder, not accident, had deprived her of her child, marked her outward conduct, while in secret she wrote to Cleopatra, detailing the whole affair, and conjuring her influence to bring Herod to justice.

With all her weaknesses, all her faults, the Egyptian queen appears fully capable of woman's kindest feelings. Indignant at the treacherous action, and sympathizing deeply in the mother's agony, Cleopatra never rested till she had prevailed on Antony to summon Herod before him, and defend himself from an accusation so fraught with treachery and horror. As this command was not, however, sent until Antony was in Laodicea, the year following the murder, some months must have elapsed, which probably removed all suspicion of Alexandra having been concerned in the charge. We only read of Herod being in great fear of the accusation, and of Cleopatra's known ill-will towards him. Had he suspected Alexandra as the originator,

we cannot doubt but that her death, either by secret murder or public execution, would instantly have followed.

Finding it impossible to evade the summons, Herod left the charge of his kingdom to his uncle Joseph, as procurator of the government. With this public office he connected a private one; the extraordinary command, that if Antony should condemn him to death, Joseph would instantly slay Mariamne, giving as his ostensible reason that he had so tender an affection for his wife, that he could not bear the idea of her becoming, after his death, the wife of any other man. Joseph promised compliance, and Herod departed.

The historians of this period appear to believe in Herod's revealed reason for wishing the death of his wife, and lay great stress on the deep love he bore her. Love! Can it be possible that sober, reasoning men, looking back on these events, tracing the whole character of this man as a map before them—beholding not one softening feeling, not one human emotion, not one pitying pause in his ruthless career—perceiving that his every aim, intent, desire, apart from individual aggrandizement, was the denationalization of Judea—to incorporate it with the heathen kingdoms, and, increasing his own power, exterminate its peculiar people from the face of the earth—can it be possible, we repeat, that thoughtful and reasoning men, who at this distance of time can look back with much clearer ken on the records of the past, than those historians but lately removed from the scenes and personages of whom they write, can yet adopt the views of Josephus, simply because he wrote them, and believe that love could ever have actuated Herod in commanding the death of his wife, or have guided his intercourse with her while she lived? Jealousy and selfishness might, indeed, have appeared to his own heart like love, but the reality would have dictated differently. He might, indeed, in his selfish tyranny, have resolved that she should never give to, nor receive happiness from any other man; but if we judge of him according to his character and acts, there was yet another and deeper reason. He could not bear the thought, that the Asmonæan faction, whom he so hated, so oppressed, so sought to exterminate in life, should obtain ascendency on his downfall, and rule that land which he had destined for himself. Mariamne was now almost its sole representative, with the exception of the aged Hyrcanus,

who, though unfitted for the office of high priest, might yet rule as sovereign—and his kinsmen, the sons of Babas. Of the existence of these last, Herod was ignorant, having years before commanded their death.

Herod could not have doubted that, on the event of his death, Mariamne would instantly be acknowledged sovereign. The customs of the country had already provided examples of a wife succeeding her husband; nor was it likely this rule would be waived, when, as in the case of Mariamne, it was the wife and not the husband who possessed legal, hereditary, and national right to the government. When we reflect on the extreme jealousy which Herod bore towards all the Asmonæans—that he never permitted an opportunity to pass without cutting them off—we have surely some foundation for the belief, that the *jealousy of ambition*, quite as deeply as the *jealousy of love*, actuated Herod in his determination, that if he died, Mariamne should die with him. He *could not* conquer the hated thought of beholding her ruling over a loving and obedient people in his stead, courted, followed, perchance united to one of her own race, willing and eager to join her in every effort to elevate Judea to her own exclusive holiness and pristine glory.

This analysis of the motives of Herod's barbarous command is merely offered to our readers as a suggestion. Histories of the time are open to them, and far more improving and satisfactory is it for them to read, and to form their own conclusions, than adopt, without examination, those of another.

From the words used by Josephus, we are led to imagine that Mariamne had a share in the government, and was consulted by the regent Joseph on all occasions. "But as Joseph was ministering the *public affairs of the kingdom*, and *was for that reason* very frequently with Mariamne, both *because his business required it*, and because of the respect he sought to pay to the queen," &c. Now, if the position of the Hebrew females had been what we are generally inclined to suppose it, the same as that of the *present* Eastern females, we should not find this very important passage. The lines marked in italics demonstrate very forcibly, that Joseph was in the habit of consulting with the queen on all matters of business; and he did so, not only because it was *the custom of the country*, but also from his great respect towards her, a respect which could not have been excited in the respective ages and relation of uncle and niece, if intellect

and wisdom, and dignity had not been added to, and enhanced the exceeding beauty and grace which she so eminently possessed.

Had any modern European historian penned the sentence we have quoted, its importance would not have been so great; but coming from Josephus, intimately acquainted as he was with the manners and customs of the Jews of that day, it is a powerful proof of the perfect equality of the Jewish female, both in her domestic and social position. Had it not been quite customary for such reference to the wife of the sovereign during his absence, the visits of Joseph must have excited, not only private, but public suspicion, and called for animadversions from the historian: instead of which he describes it quite naturally, as a usual and common occurrence: and furthermore, declares Salome's accusations to be a groundless calumny, whose only foundation was individual hate.

These facts, trifling as they seem, should be remembered, when we are told that the condition of the Jewish females was so degraded and enslaved. Josephus, individually, may have a mean opinion of the sex; but his whole history, by an almost remarkable triumph of *facts* over *prejudices*, contradicts himself, and supplies us with unanswerable evidences of the truth of our theory.

Apparently anxious to increase Mariamne's love for her husband, or rather, perhaps, to remove the cold restraint which had marked her conduct towards him since her brother's death, Joseph never allowed an opportunity to pass without alluding to the strong affection Herod bore her. Mariamne herself appears to have listened to these professions in silence. That love was strange and doubtful which only manifested itself in individual passion, wholly regardless of her feelings, as sister, daughter, and Asmonæan: but complaint of Herod never passed her lips. Hers was that true spiritual dignity, never stooping to reveal to others her own sufferings, when the originator of those sufferings was her husband.

Alexandra, however, listened to these speeches in a very different spirit, and replied with such satirical scepticism, that Joseph, in his anxious desire to prove the depth and extent of his nephew's love, incautiously revealed his last command, as an unanswerable evidence how dear she was to him, that he could not bear to separate himself from her, even in death.

The effect of this communication on Alexandra may be imagined. To lose her only remaining child for the gratification of a tyrant, would have been, in itself, agonizing enough; but Alexandra was never actuated by such feminine emotions alone; she hated Herod: as murderer of her boy, it was not much wonder. She was enraged and indignant that he should possess the heritage of her children: her mind was never quiet, constantly scheming and intriguing for his downfall; and in so doing, almost always compassing the ruin of her own family in his stead; and this last command she probably conceived, as we have done, as instigated much more by his hatred of Mariamne's *race*, than his love for her as an *individual*.

But her endeavors to incite Mariamne to revenge upon her husband were useless. There is not a single portion in the life or character of the princess which can permit the supposition of any such emotion entering her mind, even for a moment. What she felt at this command, even as from every other action of her husband, she did not reveal: but how fearfully and coldly must its dark selfishness have sunk into her heart. Life, except for one sweet tie (she was a mother), was, indeed, a dream of anxiety and sorrow; but to be deprived of it by the mandate of cruelty and violence, was no thought of relief. Did no personal considerations mingle with it (which they must have done), her children called upon her to live for them: and by the sweet emotions they inspired, illumined the heavy darkness round her. How could she feel towards a husband, capable of issuing such a command? What must have been the terror and anxiety, her daily portion till she could receive tidings of Herod's fate! And yet we read of neither word nor act, even in that horrible position, derogatory to the beautiful enduring consistency, which, to the very last, her character displayed.

And even when the report came that Herod had been executed, the idea of seeking the protection of the Romans originated with Alexandra, not with the one most injured. That Mariamne should adopt the plan, was natural for her children's sake as well as her own; for how might she bear the thought of leaving them to the care of Cypros and Salome, who would not scruple to gratify on them the hatred they bore herself? How else, in fact, was she to preserve her life? She needed not the motive attributed to her, in conjunction with her mother, to lead her to the Roman camp. Her own people

would have been sufficient protection, could she have appealed to them: but how could that be, when she was surrounded, almost imprisoned, by the relatives and creatures of Herod, whose bidding to them was absolute, even in his death?

That Mariamne looked to her personal influence with the licentious Antony, to protection and benefit, is disproved by the whole tenor of her life. A single impure thought would have prevented that perfect defence from all calumnious charges, which so satisfied the jealous Herod, that even he demanded nothing further than her simple word. Not even the most prejudiced can fling a doubt upon her name.

That Alexandra urged her to seek the Roman camp, because she looked to her child's influence with Antony, we believe, though we shudder as we do so; for such a thought was in exact accordance with her previous unnatural proceeding, of forwarding to him the pictures of her children. But even from such an influence—a mother's influence—Mariamne's own purity and innocence were her invulnerable shield. Alexandra dared not, could not have breathed such a thought to her; and was, therefore, content to work in secret. But her plans were frustrated by news from Herod himself, contradicting the report of his death, and containing a flourishing account of his favor with Antony; who not only established his absolute authority, as sovereign of Judea, but reproved Cleopatra for her interference. No allusion to the murder of Aristobulus appears to have been made on either side; and terrible must have been the pang of such omission to Alexandra.

While these events were passing, Salome had not been inwardly idle, though compelled, outwardly, to be on terms of intimacy with her brother's wife. It was impossible for the lofty character of the Asmonæan princess to condescend to treat as an equal and friend, one whose real character her penetration had probably fully discovered, and whose dislike Salome had never taken any pains to conceal. Josephus tells us, Salome "had a long time borne her ill-will; for when they had discoursed with one another, Mariamne took great freedom; and reproached the rest for the meanness of their birth." The great freedom of such reproaches we must confess ourselves incapable of discovering. It had probably been during their mutual residence at Masada, as we before stated; when Mariamne was a mere girl, and worked upon by the example

of her mother, and the prejudices of her own education, to look down somewhat scornfully on Idumæan proselytes. That Salome had a "*long time* borne her ill-will," evidently refers to that distant period, the stings of which still rankled, increased by the haughty reserve which had probably marked the queen's conduct towards her since. It was not to the sister of her husband, Mariamne could breathe the agonized suspicion of her brother's murderer; not to Salome she could reveal sorrows and emotions concealed from every other. We have no doubt her manner was cold, nay, even haughty to a fault; when it would have been more to her interest to have conciliated. But we are writing not of angelic, but of human nature; and that she did not conciliate either Salome or Herod, as Josephus evidently thinks she ought, is, to us, a convincing proof of the consistent uprightness of her conduct. We do not read of Alexandra inspiring such enmity in Cypros and Salome as Mariamne; because the former could *feign*, when she saw it was her interest, both forbearance and regard—the latter *could not*. That she thought somewhat too proudly of the "accident of birth" in herself, and too scornfully of it in others, was the fault of her education, not of herself.

An opportunity had now arrived for Salome's secret plans to ripen. Accompanied by her mother, who, in these schemes, always appears just that secondary tool which an active and vindictive spirit would make of a passive weak one, Salome met Herod on his return to Judea; and, informing him first of Alexandra's intentions to seek the protection of the Romans, artfully insinuated that Joseph would no doubt have aided the intention, followed by a direct charge of dishonorable conduct between him and Mariamne. The feelings of any man would have been roused by this calumny. With Herod, jealousy generally maddened him into a fiend. But in this instance he acted more nobly than he ever did before or after; and would almost persuade us that, *could* such a feeling be possible, he had moments of real love for Mariamne individually. He appealed to herself for the truth or falsehood of the calumny. How must even his fierce intriguing character have unconsciously acknowledged and loved the simple truth and purity of his wife, that even in such a moment he could have turned to her, and permitted the solemn assurance of innocence from her lips, to weigh against

the accusations and proofs with which Salome and his mother sought to madden him against her!

The true dignity and natural amiability of Mariamne's character are proved by her conduct in this interview. A really haughty, contentious, and scornful woman would have used reproaches, scarcely condescending to reply to such a charge, and instead of soothing, irritate still anew. Love her husband Mariamne could not, but she knew her duty as a wife. She could feel that, however he had injured her family and herself, in this instance he did her at least the justice to demand the truth or falsehood of the charge from her own lips, and with all a woman's quickness of feeling, have felt for his agony under such a suspicion, and at that moment felt she might love him yet again. Conquering all personal emotions, she so calmly, so fully exculpated herself, that Herod was not only convinced, but conjured her to pardon the momentary suspicion. Her truth, her purity, seemed for the moment to infuse themselves into him, and to arouse his better nature. Professing, and by caresses endeavoring to manifest unbounded affection and firm confidence in her fidelity, Josephus tells us, that he sought to "draw from her a like confidence in himself," words very convincing, that Mariamne, even while she vindicated herself, never lost that lofty bearing, and quiet, gentle dignity, which, from the hour of her brother's murder, had marked her conduct. Even to her husband she never stooped, as many women so situated would have done, to feign a love and confidence which she could not feel. She must have known that her life with him was in constant danger—a word might be her death-doom; but she feared him not. Strong in her own innocence and noble virtues, she walked on her way, acting as honesty dictated, without turning this side or that, or fearing any peril that straightforwardness might bring.

Exactly in accordance with the uncomplaining, but deeply feeling spirit, which would never breathe to any human ear the anguish and terror which Herod's command must have excited, was the noble remonstrance which bade her reply to his entreaties for her confidence and love, "if the command he had given, that if any harm had befallen him from Antony, she who had been no occasion of it should perish with him, were indeed a proof of his love for her!"

Even had she known the evils which were to spring from this very simple question, Mariamne could not have permitted its recollection to rankle in her heart, and secretly poison every outward demonstration of Herod's love. Touched, in all probability, at his unwonted candor towards herself, her upright mind shrank from concealing her knowledge of his secret command, and she appealed to him, in the same confiding spirit as he had appealed to her; but the effect was as different as their respective characters. Herod sprang from her side in a burst of uncontrolled fury. Her truth, her purity, all passed away before a blaze of passion, appalling to witness, and terrible to feel. Madly believing that nothing but improper intimacy with Joseph could have called for such a betrayal of a command, imparted to his uncle in strictest confidence, he rushed upon Mariamne with his drawn sword, and would have slain her on the spot, had not the calm and dignified composure, enhancing her extraordinary beauty, even at such a moment, disarmed him towards herself. His whole rage fell on Joseph and Alexandra; ordering the immediate execution of the former without permitting trial, or even defence, and imprisoning the latter with every mark of ignominy and insult.

Why his rage, on this occasion, should so have fallen on Alexandra, appears rather a problem. He seems entirely to have overlooked the charge against her, of seeking the protection of the Romans, and to have imprisoned her on this implied supposition of being accessory to the dishonor of his wife. We rather imagine that he was rejoiced at any opportunity to get her out of his way, without caring to give any reason for so doing. Nor does it appear quite clear to me, that *after* the first transports of his rage, and its gratification in the removal of two obnoxious individuals, he ever seriously retained any idea of Mariamne's guilt. He evidently lived with her, and loved her (if he could love) as before, seeking to conciliate her at every opportunity; as thus tacitly allowing, that he had accused and condemned her wrongfully; and if he really had believed her guilty, this, even to Herod, would have been impossible.

But whatever were his secret feelings, they could have brought neither rest nor comfort to the deeply wounded spirit of his injured wife. She must have felt more and more convinced that her life was not worth a day's purchase,—her honor

constantly liable to be attacked, her innocence impossible to be proved, for neither law nor defence would be allowed her, compelled to associate in daily intimacy with the man who had actually drawn his sword upon her, insulted, vilified, and then added to the horror with which she must have regarded him, by daring to profess love, and lavish caresses, from which she must have shrunk in utmost loathing,—her mother imprisoned, degraded: and though Mariamne was conscious of Alexandra's many faults, she was yet her mother: her worst qualities were hidden from her child;—the power of her race, the glory of her people, passing away before the successful ambition of an Idumæan usurper: the laws and customs of her country wholly disregarded, that by a gradual, yet sure process, the manners and customs of heathen nations should take their place;—it was impossible that to an Asmonæan, the last pure unmixed scion of that noble race, such feelings should be unknown; and what then must have been the harrowing trials of her inward and outward life? Yet we read of no manifestation of her intense suffering, no secret intrigues, no public appeals, no turning to equivocal sources of enjoyment, to banish the misery of home. No! Compared with the dark machinations, the subtle intrigues of Salome, Alexandra, and Cypros, she stands forth in untouched and untarnished lustre, as some pure spirit of truth and light, sent upon the earth to whisper that even in the blackest and most appalling periods of human depravity, the divine essence breathed within us by God himself still has existence; often, it may be, invisible, but still there. Historians do Mariamne no justice. It is only by reflection and analogy, that we can penetrate the truth concerning her and other characters of the period; and doing so with one or two, bringing out the strong lights of individual *character* against the dark shadows of the tyrant *circumstance*,—comparing what *is* with what *might be*, it is thus we relieve truth in its crystal purity from the web of prejudice and superficialism, and so learn the important lesson, that never yet was human nature wholly dark, or this earth left without some witnesses of the divinity within us. A mere glance over Josephus, and other historians compiled from him, confounds Mariamne with the intriguing and subtle spirits, male and female, by whom she was surrounded; and thus it is that we can so seldom discern the good from the bad, the divine from the earthly, and we condemn all as equally evil, equally retro-

grading. A careful study of history, not merely satisfied with the views of the writer, but using, freely and fearlessly, our own powers of reflection and analogy, would teach us much to fill our hearts with charity and hope, and inculcate the refreshing faith, that every IDEAL of the immortal mind may find in the ACTUAL its origin and end.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARIAMNE (CONTINUED).

FOR about four years Mariamne lived so far in peace, that no attack from the calumny of female hate, or from the violence of jealous passion, reached her individually. Her trials were from the sources to which we have already alluded. How fondly in this interim must her desolate heart have clung to her children, four of whom now called her mother! The very names given to her sons reveal the love borne by her to her own race and family. All Herod's other children had names relative to his Idumæan descent, or in compliment to his Roman allies. It was not likely that he would have chosen the name of Aristobulus for one of his sons, laden as it was with the recollection of his murdered victim; but we may well imagine the feelings with which Mariamne bestowed it on her first-born—how, clinging to the memory of a brother so beloved, she should seek to continue the name in her own family, and in the caresses of an infant Aristobulus, struggle for forgetfulness of the agony which still lingered round the memory of her brother. Her second son she named Alexander, in respectful recollection of her father. Her daughters, born afterwards, Salampsio and Cypros, do not appear to possess the same dear associations,—she had had no female relation to call for them; but we trace how her memory lingered with the dead, and how lonely she felt amid the living, in the simple fact of the names given to her sons.

The awakening intelligence, the infant caresses of her children,

were Mariamne's only sources of joy. She probably looked to her boys once more to raise the Asmonæan name, and renew the national glory of Judea; and had she lived to rear them from infancy to youth, to instil within them the nobility of race and faith which she felt and manifested herself, Judea would have wept their deaths still more. As it is, though Aristobulus could have been little more than six when his mother died, we can trace in the after-history of both the young men the lofty bearing and proud virtues hereditary to their mother's race—even though their Roman education must have deadened every infant impression of their peculiar religion and their holy land. Four years after Herod's injurious conduct towards herself, Mariamne was called upon to mourn the death of her last male relative, the harmless and aged Hyrcanus. Whether or not Alexandra's intrigues had really urged the old man to such measures as gave Herod a pretence for ordering his execution, or whether the plot were Herod's own, only to get rid of one whose claims to the crown he still seemed to fear, cannot now be correctly ascertained. The indolent character of Hyrcanus gives some color to the latter supposition; the intrigues and restless spirit of Alexandra authorize the former. From whatever cause, the loss to Mariamne was the same, and it widened the breach between her heart and her husband. The freedom enjoyed by Hyrcanus, and the respect, at his first accession, proffered to him by Herod, who gave him lodging at the palace, and board at the king's table, had probably given Mariamne many opportunities of enjoying the old man's society, and bound her to him still more closely than their consanguinity. She could not have believed the charges brought against him, nay, most probably *knew* that they were false, and traced their contrivance to her ambitious and ever scheming husband, beholding in them yet another proof of Herod's resolve to crush every remnant of her race. She had not, however, long to indulge in grief. Herod was, at this period, anxious to conciliate the youthful conqueror of Antony, Octavius Cæsar, who was then at Rhodes; and trembling, as usual, lest the popular love for the Asmonæans should snatch the home government from his hands, and give it to Mariamne and her children, he resorted to the cruel expedient of separating his wife from her only treasures, placed them under the care of his own mother and sister, at Masada, and confined Mariamne and Alexandra in the fortress of Alexandrina, under charge of

his treasurer Joseph, and Sohemus of Itruria, giving to the latter exactly the same selfish and brutal command as he had given to his uncle Joseph five years previously, that if his death were the consequence of his dangerous expedition, not only Mariamne, but her mother, should die with him, and the kingdom proceed to his brother Pheoras, regent for his (Herod's) sons. This command at once proves that not love, but ambition, and hatred of the Asmonæan race, were his real motives, not only at the second time, but at the first. There was now no Antony in such power as to unite himself with the wife of his victim. Octavius Cæsar was no character for the terror of such an alternative. Besides, if it were only his love (so called) which could not bear its object to survive him, why command the death of Alexandra also? It is clear throughout this dark domestic history, that love for Mariamne *individually*, and hatred of her as an Asmonæan, whose claims to the throne of her people were continually endangering his own, were ever at such fierce internal war, that he could never define from which of these contending passions the motives of his actions sprang; and the historians are therefore equally obtuse, giving often to love of the woman, what was in fact nothing but hatred of the race.

There is no proof more convincing of her right to the throne which Herod occupied, than his determination that she should never survive him to enjoy it; love held his hand while he could revel in her exceeding loveliness, but when she could no longer be his, she was to share the fate of all her race.

Josephus is amusingly astonished that Mariamne could feel no affection for her husband; and quite blames her for not dissembling her dislike. We should feel very grateful to any one who would bring forward a single instance in Mariamne's hapless life where love for Herod on her part was even possible, or what single proof he ever gave of his exceeding love for her. We will not again refer to sufferings on which we have already dilated; but ask if separation from the only beings she had loved on earth, and such imprisonment in a well-garrisoned fortress, as utterly prevented all exercise of power, and privileges of rank which she had enjoyed, were any striking proof of conjugal regard? In Herod's previous absence he had had at least the grace to associate his wife with his uncle in the government. In this, Josephus expressly tells us "that they had no power over anything, either of others, or of their own affairs;" and this

he need not have written, unless conscious that they both had the right and the will to execute authority.

To some characters, the injury of placing her children under any care but her own, would have swallowed up all other emotions. But Mariamne was no ordinary woman. To her heart it was not only maternal suffering: the cruel deprivation of her privileges was in direct disregard of the customs and habits of her people, who, in every stage of their eventful history, gave to mothers, and mothers only, the education of both sons and daughters. It was an insult as well as a source of personal suffering, aggravating not lessening the degradation of imprisonment. Had her children been still with her, she would not have regarded her residence at Alexandrina as anything more than a measure of security. But when she felt herself deprived of a privilege granted to the meanest of her subjects, so watched and guarded, that she had scarcely the liberty of careless speech; was it marvel, was it out of nature, that her proud Asmonæan blood deepened the injured feelings of the wife and mother, and that from that hour she made no further efforts to love her husband?

Yet still, true to the beautiful dignity of her womanly character, Mariamne descended to neither intrigue nor revenge. Her winning beauty and graceful manner, so fascinated all who approached her, even her keepers, creatures strong in Herod's confidence and favor, that had she ever attempted to obtain her rights by an appeal to the people, there does not seem a doubt that she would ultimately have obtained them; all Herod's magnificence in building, in connexion with foreign potentates, had not made him popular. He was endured far more for his Asmonæan wife than for himself, and hundreds, aye thousands, amidst the Jewish people would have flocked round Mariamne, had she but uplifted her standard in opposition to the authority of Herod. But she was far too essentially and exquisitely feminine, to plunge the nation into renewed war and misery for her sake; far too truly noble, to make her private anguish a theme of publicity and blood, or reveal to others, save Herod's self, the loss of affection which his acts had caused. We never hear a syllable of complaint or reproach, save boldly and openly to himself. Her character changed not an atom of its gentle dignity, its forbearing endurance. Naught of irritation, sourness, or that *consciousness of injury*, which some women love

to reveal, as proving them martyrs, marks her conduct. Sorrow could not make her selfish; painful as it is, when the heart is aching in its own unceasing anguish, to think of pleasing others even by daily words and common manner, yet even in this lowly duty she did not fail.

Sohemus, like her previous guardian Joseph, was unable to retain the cruel command of Herod, when in presence of its intended victim. Though at first stern, and resolved to remain faithful to his master, his determination faded away before the fascination of Mariamne, who, without any effort on her own part, won every heart that still retained the emotions of humanity. Even Josephus's prejudiced and contradictory account absolves Mariamne from any undue influence over Sohemus. He was evidently at first led to shrink from obeying Herod's injunction, simply from the unfailing gentleness of her manner in their daily intercourse. Then, imagining that Herod would not obtain the confirmation of his authority from Cæsar, he became anxious to conciliate the queen; convinced that if she did survive her husband, "she would give him abundant recompense" for his fidelity to herself—for she could not be overlooked in the settling of the government, *as she must either reign herself, or be very near those that reigned.* He hoped also, that his informing her of the charge intrusted to him and of his determination at all hazards to disobey—would obtain him favor even if Herod did return, by Mariamne's influence obtaining for him some honorable post.

This conviction that Mariamne must reign herself in case of Herod's death, or be very near those that did, meaning her sons, in preference to their elder half-brother Antipater, proves in what light she was in reality regarded by the people in general, and confirms our supposition, that had she been constituted like her intriguing mother and so raised the banner of revenge and revolt, she would have found very many to support her cause. It tells us, too, that her being a female in no way interfered with her right of heritage in the estimation of her people; and this is an important evidence of woman's social position at that period.

The information of Sohemus could scarcely have been unexpected, though it could not fail to alienate Mariamne from Herod yet more. Her mother, too, was to share her fate: the tyrant was not content with one victim. How was it possible

she could regard his professions of affection as meaning aught but hypocrisy and guile? How trust to them, when it was so clearly evident that he would never rest till every scion of her race had been cut off? How must her fond heart have clung to the recollection of her children, thus doomed to be snatched from them! And leaving them to such a father! If we reflect but deeply on her position, we surely cannot agree with Milman as to the difficulty of deciding "what ought to have been her feelings and her conduct."

Herod returned—crowned with success. Octavius Cæsar had confirmed him in possession of Judea—accepted his friendship, and dismissed him with distinguished honors. The home affairs of Judea had prospered, and, seeking Mariamne, he revealed his unexpected success with an exultation and rejoicing which could find little response in the heart he addressed. She listened to him calmly, coldly—it might be haughtily. The time had passed, when, as in their former interview, she could appeal to him, and inquire if the order of her death in case of his, were indeed proof of love. Those simple words had caused the death of one individual whose only crime was fidelity to herself, and the imprisonment of her mother, who, though generally intriguing, had in this instance offended in nothing save in being the wife and mother of Asmonæans. How might she speak them again? Yet how could her noble spirit stoop to the semblance of interest and affection, when Herod's own deeds had alienated both? It was impossible—and with calm and proud indifference, she received him; and so treated him thenceforward. That there was imminent danger in this line of conduct, no doubt she knew; but her mind was not one to stoop to deceit for preservation. Had she concealed her sentiments of dislike, she would have failed in the beautiful truth which encircles her as a halo. No conjugal duty could have demanded this concealment. There may be some to think that under all insult, all oppression, all injustice, she should have remembered that she was a wife, and in duty bound to submit to her husband. We answer, that, as a wife, she never failed in duty; she could have appealed to the Jewish law, and have demanded a divorce; she could have returned his underhand measures against her life and happiness, by equally undermining his, both publicly and privately; she might have sought solace for her domestic misery and personal gratification in pleasures of doubt-

ful tendency, which, in that dark stormy period, and laxity of morals, would have passed unnoticed; but Mariamne was a Jewish wife, a Jewish mother; and so, unsullied by even the passing breath of such dark thoughts, she failed not either in fidelity or allegiance. She endured without one murmur, one struggle to ameliorate her misery; but her truth would have been sacrificed, had she treated the human author of her trials as if she could give him love, or believe in his.

Her coldness roused Herod's contending passions of love and hate almost to madness. The one repeatedly urged him to violent measures against her; the other restrained him, fearing by her death to inflict deeper misery upon himself than upon her. No profession, no effort on his part, could change her dignified and quiet manner to the demonstration of love, for which his strange spirit seemed to long. Her presence bowed him, monster as in reality he was, under the influence of overwhelming love for her individually; her absence changed this feeling into as overwhelming a hate for her as an Asmonæan, who dared insult him by an assumption both of dignity and coldness—the first of which his secret conscience admonished him was natural to her rank and race, and the latter deserved by his own deeds in the ruthless murder of her grandfather, father,* and brother.

Now, then, was the opportunity for which Salome had so long waited. Though foiled four years previous, her envy and hatred had not diminished, but, hoarded in her own evil heart, imparted only to her mother, who was her ready adjunct, were ready to pour forth as a poisonous torrent, the first moment that she could gain her brother's ear. Already half maddened by his contending passions, Herod listened eagerly, and heard such specious tales of calumny and shame as excited his jealousy of herself, in addition to his hatred of her race. Still he could not proceed against her, though every lying tale in his distorted fancy was confirmed by her proud coldness towards himself. Each week increased the evil. His ill-regulated fitful mind and temper—the fierce strife of opposing, but equally violent passions—the one inflamed to madness, from the malignant whisperings of his serpent

* Though the father of Mariamne did not fall by Herod's own hand or command, he was supposed to have had a principal share in his death.

sister—the other heightened, fired by the sight of that soul-subduing beauty which shone forth in its cold resplendence, unwarmed by a single ray towards him—all raged within, and at length so furiously, that he was on the point of proceeding to extremities, to the gratification of Salome, when the evil was postponed.

No domestic passions ever seemed to interfere with his public ambition. Hearing that Antony and Cleopatra were both dead, and Cæsar conqueror of Egypt, he hastened to meet him there, leaving his family affairs in their present turbulent condition, and without, as usual, leaving any charge concerning his wife. It was when setting out on this journey that Mariamne recommended Sohemus (no doubt at his own entreaty) to Herod, asking for him a place in the government, which was granted. She could appeal for one who had acted faithfully towards herself and children, though she would ask no favor, no privilege for herself.

Nothing but prosperity awaited Herod in all his foreign concerns. Octavius Cæsar not only received him as his personal friend, but richly increased his monarchical dominions. The dominions of Gadara, Hyppos, and Samaria—the cities of Gaza, Anthedon, Joppa, and Strabo's Tower, all commanding extensive maritime commerce, were made over to him by the emperor; and after attending Cæsar as far as Antioch, Herod returned to his own capital, flushed with success, and more imperious than ever.

Still, though every throb of ambition seemed fulfilled, Herod could not be satisfied. While earnestly pursuing his career of individual power, all the inward torments of jealous hate and jealous love subsided, but were recalled with redoubled violence on his return. The emperor of the world called him friend, and treated him as such. Other foreign potentates courted, flattered, paid him homage. A monarchy larger and more independent than had belonged to any of the former kings of Judea, acknowledged him as king; and its millions of inhabitants were obedient and peaceful through terror, if not through love. And still one woman heart refused him the homage of love and reverence which he demanded —refused to disgrace and humble her own noble Asmonæan name by acknowledging him rightful sovereign of Judea. So at least, on mature reflection, it appears that Herod's own con-

science regarded her conduct. Had she given him the love he demanded, he would have accepted it as a tacit acknowledgment of his supremacy; but the unwavering coldness of her manner, the noble bearing, throwing an air of princely dignity over her simplest action—the calm indifference with which she regarded his exaltation, all betrayed, that over her soul he could have no power, either by love or hate: and, therefore, the mortification of feeling himself, in spite of his power, his magnificence, his severity, actually despised by a weak and delicate female whom he would have crushed a hundred times, had not his consuming passion for her exceeding loveliness held his hand, heightened his jealous passion to a pitch of madness which embittered every moment of his life.

So some months passed, nearly a year, from his last command which Sohemus had betrayed. Salome and Cypros continued their poisonous intrigues, their enmity receiving hot increase from its apparent utter impossibility to chafe the collected spirit of their victim. That her penetrative mind beheld their designs is most probable, and also that holding them in most supreme contempt, her manner increased in haughtiness towards them. Mariamne had never been taught to conquer, or even to know the natural failings of her race. If she had, she would not have *aggravated* enmity, though she might not have averted it. She would not have stooped to feign a friendship she could not feel; but she would have avoided all occasions to give offence. But to one educated as herself this was not easy. Her very hatred of the insidious conduct unfailingly practised towards her by Cypros and Salome, naturally increased the contempt which their Idumæan birth had originally excited. She no doubt knew the danger which this enmity threatened: but fear was as much unknown to the females as to the males of the Asmonæan line. That she treated them with undue haughtiness, and may even have spoken of them with the contempt she felt, is not unlikely. We have no wish to exalt our hapless ancestress into the paragon of perfection which some writers create their heroines; but this we will assert, her failings were those of her education, her virtues intrinsically her own, and so far superior in number and in brightness to her faults, that combined as they are with her severe and unmerited sufferings, we can only think of them, and love

her for their sakes. The fierce flames of hate which had been smothered so long, at length burst. Every preparation, in case of such an opportunity, had long been made by Salome. The train, as it were, lay only waiting for the kindling match.

In one of his paroxysms of love, Herod one day sent for Mariamne, and endeavored by lavish caresses and passionate professions to draw from her a similar return; but he sought in vain. Roused at length from her wonted calm endurance, unable to restrain the agony of recollection, deepened as it was by such false professions of a love which his every act denied, she demanded how she could love one whose ambition and reckless cruelty had caused alike her brother and her grandfather to be slain, and heaped misery and degradation upon her family and herself? Enraged beyond all forbearance, Herod would have committed personal violence on his wife, but appears to have been again restrained by her still subduing beauty. But his chafed spirit so raged and stormed, that Salome paused no longer. Mariamne had scarcely left the apartment, before his cup-bearer entered, and with every appearance of agitation informed him that the queen had bribed him with many presents to administer a love-potion, the composition of which he knew not, and fearing what its effects might be, had resolved, as the safest course, on communicating the whole to the king.

Already more than usually enraged, and glad of any charge wherewith to proceed against Mariamne, the king instantly commanded her most faithful eunnch to be seized and tortured, knowing that the queen could have done nothing without his aid. The man, in his extremity of agony, never alluded to the charge for which he was tortured; but allowed, that so far as he knew, the dislike borne by his mistress to the king had been occasioned by something which, during Herod's absence, Sohemus had said to her. Again the same fearful belief of treachery and dishonor, which had actuated his conduct towards his uncle five years before, took possession of his heart and mind, and this time with still more fearful effects. Mariamne's petition for Sohemus probably heightened the conviction of her guilt, and prevented all delay. Sohemus was seized and slain without even being informed of his offence, or being enabled to exculpate the queen by his denial of the charge. Mariamne herself, summoned before judges of Herod's own selection, was tried on the

accusation of her husband—some historians say of adultery; but the words of Josephus are these:—"He allowed his wife to take her trial, and *got together those that were most faithful to him*, and laid an *elaborate accusation against her* for *this love-potion and composition*, which had been charged upon her by way of *calumny* only." Now this is convincing to me that he did *not* accuse her of adultery, knowing that if he did so, she might demand, and he dared not have refused, the trial of the waters of jealousy, expressly provided by the mercy of the Eternal for such emergencies. It was an unchanged statute of her people, as much her right then as it had been that of her ancestress in centuries past. Again, the judges themselves, however terrified at the wrath of the king, dared not have pronounced her guilty of adultery, without positive proofs of her crime, at the mouth of more than one witness. The intemperate rage of Herod had so far acted against himself, that the death of Sohemus prevented his appearance in treachery and falsehood, if he had been so inclined to inculpate the victim. For substantiating the charge of attempted assassination through the love-potion, however, Herod could easily obtain tools. The same heart and hand which had already kindled the brand, was still there to nurse it into a wide-spreading flame. The creatures of her schemes were ready to do the bidding of their sovereign. Once in Salome's power, it was easy to complete the deed. Herod's phrensy prevented all correct judgment: and if for the words, "got together those that were most faithful to him," we read, "got together all those that were ready to swear away their own souls, if by so doing they could oblige their mistress Salome, and compass the death of Mariamne," we may chance to obtain the only correct rendering of the sentence.

Before such judges, and against such witnesses, what would innocence avail? Josephus does not give us the particulars of the trial; but from the queen's conduct on her way to execution, we may suppose her demeanor when in presence of her judges. A dignified composure, a calm denial of the charge, were the only words which probably paused those lips which falsehood had never tarnished. She was innocent—innocent alike of the charge accused, and the charge implied; for no doubt, though adultery was not made the reason of the trial, for the reasons stated above, they sought to cover her with the implication of dishonor; and innocence, in such awful hours, in

truth is strength. It will not always support us through lingering years of misery, of being shunned by our fellows, because accused of deeds we have no power to prove are false; but God Himself has mercy then, and when the frame dwindles from a breaking heart, takes us to His Heaven, to enjoy an eternity of blessedness for a period of woe.

On the threshold of that eternity, Mariamne stood; and no thought of the opinion of man could disturb the tranquillity with which innocence strengthened her to look on death. She must long have expected this. From the hour of her brother's murder, disclosing as it did the true character of Herod, and his fixed resolve to exterminate the Asmonæan line, she must have anticipated for herself a similar fate. She had faced it, as impending for five years; and the noble spirit which had enabled her, during that interval, so calmly to regard it, as never to waver in the line of strict integrity, or even by word or sign to lower the dignity of her character and race, would not forsake her at its termination.

The mockery of justice enacted by that iniquitous trial, Josephus himself proves. Creatures of Herod, his will was theirs, and their sentence his. "Accordingly when the court was at length satisfied *that he was so resolved*, they passed the sentence of death upon her." There is not a syllable as to their own conviction, or their own judgment, nor the wherefore of their *sentence*, except the resolution of the king—not a word as to the guilt of the prisoner. Still Herod shrank in his selfish passion from losing her entirely. He remanded the sentence of death for one of perpetual imprisonment. But dreading that, if permitted to live even now, every scheme for her destruction would fall to the ground, Salome and her party never rested, till by dint of alarming the *ambition* of the king, they obtained the order for her execution. Here, again, we penetrate the passion which divided Herod's heart with the opposing element of love. It was not by bringing forward the chances of her again dishonoring him, or her becoming the property of another, with which Salome now endeavored to work upon her brother, but by artfully suggesting, that were she permitted to live, there was always danger of the multitude's revolting, releasing her from prison, and making her sovereign in his stead; for such is evidently the meaning of Josephus's words; and not, as a mere hasty reading might suppose, that the people were so enraged

against her, that they would be tumultuous if she were suffered to live. This is contrary to both history and reason. We know that Herod was not so much beloved, that the multitudes should be enraged against an attempted assassin, by the simple fact that conspiracies were continually forming against him—men forming in bodies by some means to compass his death. His very race, as well as his public measures and private character, were odious; whereas Mariamne was almost idolized, alike for herself, and as being the last representative of a race so long beloved. A very little reflection on these facts will, I think, be convincing, that the above analysis of Salome's arguments is founded on reason.

The order for the execution of the queen was at length issued, and Mariamne prepared for it with the same calm intrepidity as she had faced it years before. Yet who can refuse sympathy in this undeserved fate for one so innocent, so lovely, and still so young, that she could barely have exceeded five and twenty years? Nor was she entirely without ties, binding her with silvery links to earth, fraught with anguish and trial as it was. All whom she had loved with a girl's and woman's fondness, had either fallen in death, or by their dark deeds annihilated every capability of affection; but others had arisen, to concentrate on them a heart clinging in its desolation to them, even yet more closely, more devotedly, than ordinary love. How might she leave her infant children? Who on earth was to care for them? Would not the same persevering hatred poison their young existence as it had her own? To whom did she leave them—Herod, Salome, Cypros? Would they supply her place? And her own mother? Alas! she must have already learned that she, too, was not one on whom her heart could rest, or to whom she could intrust treasures far more precious than herself; and in the brief interval stretching between her and death, she was to feel this yet more agonizingly—the last drop of bitterness flung into her cup was thrown by a mother's hand! It was not then the mere separation by her own violent death from her beloved ones. Thoughts of far deeper anguish must have occupied some of her parting moments. Nor is this, as we shall, no doubt, be accused, taking too great license, and allowing imagination to usurp the unvarnished tale of history. We never refuse the meed of sympathy to Anne Boleyn, Lady Jane Grey, Mary Queen of Scots, and other sufferers of more modern

times; yet, compared with the unsullied purity of Mariamne, the first of these was unredeemably guilty, and the last burdened by many historians with a charge (which, though we ourselves believe it a false and most unproved one, still attaches itself to her name) of a husband's murder. In point of innocence, the second only can be named with her; and sad as was her fate, it was little removed from joy, compared to the trials and death of Mariamne. If we give these three our sympathy—if we teach the young heart to feel for them—if the tale of Anne's parting from her own Elizabeth, and remorse for her neglect of Mary, excite our sympathy—why shall we hurry over the memoirs of our own, and refuse them the meed of admiration, love, and pity, which, if we reflect, even their brief unsatisfactory records in Jewish history must excite? Let any wife and mother place herself in idea in the position of the Asmonæan princess; or if this be too fanciful for her imagination, let her suppose her nearest and dearest relatives injured alike openly and secretly by the man she has married, and whom she could have loved —herself insulted, doubted—treated at one time with furious love, at others imprisoned, and in danger of her life from the same being—and then accused, condemned, without hope of justice or relief—let her ponder on this; and if she be a mother, say where her last thoughts would rest, and then accuse us, if she can, of so infusing history with imagination, as to render it impossible to divide the one from the other. Is human nature, human feeling, different now to what it was in former ages? Shall we deprive the characters of history of all power of emotion, only because they existed under a different modification of social customs? If so, and we are not to exercise either reflection, analysation, or intellect, history must remain the bare recital of events and dates, of which so many justly complain, and from which no lesson, no moral, can be deduced.

CHAPTER IX.

MARIAMNE (CONCLUDED)—ALEXANDRA—SALOME.

JOSEPHUS is silent both as to the period elapsing between Mariamne's trial and her death, and as to the manner of that execution. Stoning had originally been the Jewish penalty for all crimes; but the Roman punishment of decapitation had very probably taken its place, and by the axe, no doubt, the last of the Asmonæans fell.

Whatever the death, no doubt attends the last moments of the victim. Calmly, unflinchingly, we are told, she walked to the place of execution. No terror, no unseemly indignation at the injustice dealt her, marred the modest and tranquil dignity which had marked her life, and left her not in death. There she was, in her touching youth and exquisite beauty, accused of crimes, which not one of those vast multitudes who looked on believed, though none dared tempt the tyrant's wrath by rising in her cause. Not a sound broke the awful stillness—the very emissaries of Salome, scattered in large numbers amongst the crowds to silence the faintest semblance of murmuring or pity, appear to have been awed by the dignified composure of the prisoner, and horror-struck, even as the rest of the spectators, by the sudden appearance of Alexandra, not, as might be supposed, to lament and mourn over her child, but to heap upon her reproaches and abuse, declaring "that her punishment came justly upon her for her ingratitude to her husband, and her insolent behavior in not making proper returns to him who had been their common benefactor." The motives of this fearful hypocrisy, terror for herself, and the consequent desire to avert all personal danger from Herod, by publicly condemning her child, whom she above all persons knew to be innocent, appear to have been penetrated, even at that moment, by the multitudes, and excited their loudest condemnation; but no word of reproach or suffering escaped the lips of her whom a *mother* thus assailed. Yet how bitter must have been the pang of such unexpected conduct. How fearfully must the cold

selfishness which could, at such a moment, seek personal security by asserting belief in the guilt of her own child, whom she knew to be unstained, have sunk on the heart of the prisoner! But all human emotions had been stilled—she was standing on the threshold of that glorious eternity, which to her, as a woman of Israel, a descendant of priests, was revealed in all its fulness, all its bliss. A brief, brief pang, and she knew she should be with the idolized brother of her youth, whose angel spirit might even at that moment be hovering near her, to waft her released soul to the footstool of her God. For Israel death had no terror—immortality was to them revealed. They knew that with God was the fulness of joy, and at His right hand were everlasting pleasures. And in the calm fortitude, the meek endurance yet lofty bearing of the Asmonæan princess, we read, not the stoicism of the Roman martyr, but the rejoicing faith and unshrinking courage of the Hebrew believer, firm in the blessed consciousness of Immortality and Heaven!

One look of pitying forgiveness fell from the eyes of the injured, on her unnatural mother, and a few words addressed to those near her expressed the deep concern for Alexandra's degradation. Not for its injury towards herself, but as it concerned her mother individually, exposing her, as it did, to the contempt of the populace, and little likely to conciliate the king. These appear to have been her last words; "for herself," Josephus continues, "she went to death with an unshaken firmness of mind, and without *even changing* the color *of her face*, and thereby discovered the nobility of her descent to the spectators, even in the last moments of her life."

We do not think that "nobility of descent" is or was the real lesson derived from such a death. It was the calm intrepidity of innocence—the composed and gentle firmness of a soul at peace with itself, and resting on its God. She had lived long enough to learn, and feel too sadly, that not in this world may we "distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not;" and, the pangs of parting from her children once subdued, she gladly turned to that everlasting home where her innocence was known, where her wearied spirit would find its yearned-for rest, and her desolate heart, which earth had crushed, be filled with love infinite as perfect, bliss unending as complete.

We have endeavored to make manifest throughout this

eventful history, how mistaken and contradictory are the impressions with which Josephus would burden the character of Mariamne. Whereas Salome, whose actions it is utterly impossible to misunderstand, and whose dark thoughts and sinful machinations are distinctly visible, from the moment she appears on the theatre of life to the end of her existence, he dismisses without a shadow of blame, either written or implied. Thus leaving the idea, that trifling errors of education, the only faults which can be applied to Mariamne, are, because visited with suffering and death, infinitely more culpable and heinous than the palpable and uncalled-for crimes of calumny, false witness, murder, and a long list of atrocities, either actually performed by Salome herself, or planned and committed by her sole orders and persuasions, but whose blackness becomes white in the eyes of the historian, through the marvellous transformation of temporal elevation and success. Surely, we ought to be careful how we place such opinions in the hands of our children, and not rest contented with merely giving them history to peruse. As an author, Josephus is most valuable; we have no doubt of his accuracy with regard to events, but we cannot depend upon either his discrimination or impartiality in the delineation of *character*, or in the justice and entireness of his conclusions. We repeatedly find that his drawing up, as it were, of a character, is contradicted by the whole tenor of previous events, which, being related by himself as facts, must guide us much more correctly than his own conclusions. We have seen this already in the life and character of Alexandra; and we shall perceive it as clearly in his winding up of the character of Mariamne, which we subjoin:

"And thus died Mariamne; *a woman of excellent character both for chastity and greatness of soul;* but she wanted moderation, and had too much contention in her nature. Yet had she all that can be said, in the beauty of her body, *and her majestic appearance in conversation; and thence* arose the greatest part of the occasions, why she did not prove so agreeable to the king, nor live so pleasantly with him as she might otherwise have done, for while she *was most indulgently used by the king*, out of his fondness for her, and did not expect that he could do any hard thing to her, she took too unbounded a liberty. Moreover, that which afflicted her was, what he had done to her relations, and she ventured to speak of all they had suffered by him; and at last greatly provoked both the king's

mother and sister, till they became enemies to her, and even he himself also did the same, on whom alone she depended for her expectations of escaping the last of punishments."

Now we would ask any casual reader, what would be the impression of this extraordinary passage? Would they not suppose that Mariamne had not only drawn down her fate upon herself, but had actually deserved it? That she was the only one to blame, and Herod, Cypros, and Salome, all alike were guiltless? And yet, even in leaving this most unfounded and most unjust impression, of what does he accuse her? Compelled (it would seem almost in spite of himself) to acknowledge her chastity and greatness of soul, all he can bring against her is, that her "majestic appearance in conversation" (meaning, we imagine, the calm dignity of her manner) rendered her less agreeable to the tyrant than she would have been could she have resembled her mother, and condescended to deceive. We are told that "she was most indulgently used by the king, who out of his great fondness for her could do no hard thing to her, and that, therefore, she took too great a liberty, wanted moderation, and evinced too contentious a spirit." Where throughout her history, and we have given it at length, can we find the foundation for either of these clauses? How did Herod demonstrate his deep love and great indulgence? By the murder of her brother and grandfather, the constant indignity offered to her mother, the death of all those who befriended or were faithful to her; or by the continued insults offered to herself, in doubting her truth, commanding her imprisonment and separation from her children, twice sentenced to death in case of Herod's death, and final execution on a false and unproved charge? Where can we find proofs of her want of moderation, &c.? In her calm endurance of her constant sufferings? In her breathing not one syllable of complaint or injury, forming no plots, joining no intrigues, passing through her brief life in such unstained, unsullied purity and chastity, that not even the most prejudiced can dare fling a stigma on her noble name; exposed times out of number to temptation from the machinations of an evil mother, and the insults of a phrensied husband, yet eschewing all, and standing forth in her own brightness; before which neither slander, hatred, nor calumny, could stand? We read how impossible Salome felt it to compass her death on the plea of her dishonor by the artifice of the love-potion, which in the

end she was compelled to adopt. In what can we discover too contentious a spirit? In the high-minded uprightness which revealed to the injurers, and to the injurers alone, her consciousness of their evil intentions towards her? In the absence of all deceptive conciliation, and yet the avoidance of all attempted vengeance? In what took she too unbounded a liberty? We read of her asking no boon save one, and that was Sohemus's own seeking. If, indeed, Herod so "indulgently used her," and she was of so rapacious a disposition, is it not almost marvellous that history reveals not a single instance in which this unbounded liberty was used; that Mariamne should never have accused Salome and Cypros to the king, and urged his interference to prevent their injurious treatment of herself: that we do not read of her interfering also in the government, in foreign and civil affairs, in which other women, who really did take "too unbounded a liberty," were so often mischievously engaged? There was neither law nor custom in her nation to prevent this interference, had she been so inclined.

Again, was it so very remarkable that "what afflicted her most, was Herod's conduct to her relations?" Yet Josephus, and even Milman, seem to imagine that because she was the murderer's wife, she was not to feel these things. Was it in human nature to retain affection or even esteem for a man "who had more or less concern in the murder of her grandfather, father, brother, and uncle," * even could she forget and forgive that twice he had commanded her death in case of his own? Was it a fault that "she ventured to speak of all they had suffered by him?" Or was it not rather a proof of a noble spirit and courageous soul, which urged her to risk her own life, rather than by silence and deceit tacitly acquiesce in the *necessity* for their destruction? We are told, too, that Mariamne "greatly provoked both the king's mother and sister;" but of their hatred to her, and malignantly working enmity, Josephus takes no note, permitting us to suppose that it was *deserved*, and Mariamne, not Salome, was to blame. Haughtiness and reserve, then, according to this historian, are greater crimes than slander, false witness, and actual murder. Mariamne might have treated Salome and Cypros with undue haughtiness, but the fault originated in her education, not herself. Had she, as she might

* Milman.

have done, sought to injure Salome with the king, or given evidence of her dislike by public insult or private annoyances, we might acknowledge that she was in error; but of such things we can discern no trace whatever. Mariamne's sole offence was having in her girlhood reproached Salome and Cypros with the meanness of their birth, urged on to do so most probably by her designing mother; and for this offence Salome pursued her with unrelenting hate, caring for neither falsehood nor murder, so she at length succeeded in removing her by death. We know that Mariamne's original offence must have been committed quite in her girlhood, for, from the time of the death of Aristobulus, Salome commenced her machinations; and, aware of her hate and designs against her as she must have been, was it strange that Mariamne, shrinking from sight of falsehood even in manner, should treat Salome on all occasions with a reserve and dignity, which her seditious and violent spirit considered as haughtiness and insult impossible to be borne, and so aggravating her passionate desire for revenge?

Such is our dispassionate analysis of Josephus's complex winding up of the character of Mariamne. We can only entreat our readers, old and young, to refer to the history itself, and if our narrative of the same events be deemed erroneous, or prove to have no foundation on reflection and reason, to draw thence their own conclusions, and pronounce judgment on the character of our hapless ancestress accordingly. We wish merely to *suggest*, to *assist*, in the perusal of history, not to push forward our individual opinions in opposition to existing authorities, or in contradiction of established theories; acknowledging at the same time boldly and freely, that having long thought neither Jewish nor Gentile historians have done justice to the personal character and the painful position of the last proud scion of the Asmonæan line, we were glad of this opportunity so to bring her forward, that our readers, perceiving *little things* and *trifling events* more clearly before them than they can be found in a history of the time, may form their own conclusions.

Long as we have already lingered, our task were scarcely accomplished, did we not endeavor to "point a moral" in this eventful tale. Let not our young sisters turn from its perusal, in that sadness and sinking of the heart which must accompany the first conviction, that virtue, and goodness, and truth, are *not* rewarded upon earth; that in Salome

they perceive guilt and crime triumphant, prosperous, rejoicing; in Mariamne, the virtuous falling a victim to the sinful, truth crushed by falsehood, innocence by guilt; Herod living out his days, surrounded by temporal prosperity, power, magnificence, conquering alike foes abroad and seditions at home —courted by foreign potentates—allied to the empress of the world;—Aristobulus the young, the innocent, the gifted, cut off by the dark deeds of this very man, in his first and loveliest youth. To the unenlightened and the sceptic, these are truths fraught with darkness and suffering, likely to lead to the fearful labyrinth of denial and atheism—necessity and nature. To the believer, be his actual creed what it may, so it be founded on the revelation of the Old Testament (which Christian as well as Hebrew is), narratives like these are some of the very strongest, most unanswerable evidences of our immortality which history presents. In the history of Jeroboam, we find the foundation and commentary on this assertion. His young son Abijah fell sick, and Jeroboam desired his wife to take a present in her hand, and seek Ahijah the prophet, to implore his intercession for the restoration of the child. The aged prophet was blind, and though the wife of Jeroboam concealed her rank and name, and sought to pass herself for another woman, the Lord revealed her name and mission, and Ahijah, after prophesying the awful calamities which would befall the house of Jeroboam for their iniquities, proceeded to pronounce these impressive and remarkable words, "Arise thou, therefore, get thee to thine own home, and when thy feet enter into the city *the child shall die.* And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him, *for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave,* BECAUSE IN HIM THERE WAS FOUND SOME GOOD THING TOWARD THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL, IN THE HOUSE OF JEROBOAM." If we would but remember this striking fact, revealed as it is in the inspired word of the Eternal, to be our consolation and instruction in those darker ages, when such direct communings with our Father in Heaven were to be at an end; even Profane History would strengthen us in our belief, and reveal many times the truth of our immortality.

We should cease to regard death with the horror which its very name often inspires, if we would but realize it, *not* as the

cessation of existence, but as the revealed entrance into another and purer sphere, where every intellectual capacity, every capability of love and affection, every aspiring after the great and good, the beautiful and true, which has blessed us here, will find exercise and fulfilment, completion and perfection. If we believe in a God, and that He is, as He revealed Himself, a God of TRUTH, we *must* believe in our existence elsewhere, or this world is chaos—our God but a name, His word false. We could write more, much more on this argument, but this is not the place. Writing for professed Israelites, we must suppose that their belief in immortality, in death, not as a cessation, but as a *change* of existence, is as fixed as their belief in their Fathers' God; and if it be, we shall find little difficulty in removing all impression of doubt and sadness from the history of Mariamne.

The iniquities of Judea and her children at the period of Herod, and some years before, far exceeded, in magnitude and variety, those of Israel in the time of Jeroboam. If we glance forward from the reign of Herod, we shall perceive misery increasing on every side—horrors multiplying—man rising against man, more appallingly, more terribly, than had ever before devastated this beautiful world. In addition to the tale of Jeroboam's son, we are told in the same Divine Book, "*The righteous is taken from the evil to come.*" And in the death of Aristobulus and Mariamne, both these Divine Truths are fulfilled. "There was good" found in Aristobulus; and God, in His mercy, over-ruled the wickedness of man, to the eternal blessedness of the youth he loved. He took him, ere temptation and evil could sully the purity and virtue which his youth revealed. Every kind of death is suffering. It is the penalty we all pay for the sinful inclinations inherited from our first parents; but what was the agony of a violent death, granted it lasted an hour, compared with the eternity of bliss awaiting the released spirit with its pitying God? The sin of Herod was the same. That the Eternal overruled his hate and persecution of the innocent, to the endless joy and peace of his victim, in no way exonerated him from the blackness of the deed. Crime is crime. The worker of sin looks but to the triumph of his wickedness, and, as such, is responsible to his God; but his evil deeds, however they may seem to

carry all before them while below, do but add a glory to the Divine economy above, and for those they seek to injure upon earth, provide yet deeper bliss in heaven.

As it was with Aristobulus, so it was with Mariamne. Her life was, indeed, one of far severer trials, far deeper agony than his; but God saw she needed them to fit her for heaven, or they would not have been sent. There might have been inclinations and whisperings of evil naturally in her heart, which, without the trial of suffering, might have made her another Alexandra or Salome; but God loved her, and so He purified her in the ordeal of suffering, and then in His deep mercy took her to Himself ere the evil days came, and she saw her beloved children tortured and condemned. If we look forward in the history of her family, we must feel that she was indeed removed from the "evil to come." The Eternal might, indeed, had He so willed, have "made bare His holy arm," and wrought salvation and delivery for her even on earth; but to make such a distinction between the righteous and the wicked in this world, would interfere with the free will, to choose the good and eschew the evil, or choose the evil and forsake the good, which God himself bestowed on man. No; in this life, evil will often appear to be predominant; but we shall cease to murmur and despond that so it is, if we will but look up firmly and faithfully to that world, where all that is incomprehensible here will be made clear, and the injured and the innocent live for ever with their God, shining as the chosen "jewels" of His crown.

Do not then let us envy the prosperous, and believe ourselves forsaken, if our sojourn on earth be one of adversity and pain. We have still a Father who loveth those whom He chastises, for by chastisement and probation He prepares them for that eternal blessedness which is denied to those who continue in their hardened course. In direct opposition to the comforting words we have quoted, we read in the same inspired book, "When the wicked spring up like grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, *it is that they shall be destroyed for ever.*" And again, "Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity, *for they shall soon be cut down like the grass*, and wither like the green herb." If we recollect these words, and those quoted before—if we believe, humbly and faithfully, that this world is actually

to the righteous but the *threshold* of existence, and permit this belief to attend us, not only in every *event*, but in every *thought* of life, running through our studies from the severest to the lightest, history would not be the sad and unsatisfactory task which it but too often is. We should never feel saddened and depressed at the often apparent triumph of oppression and evil over the helpless and the good, for we should know this was but the surface, whose depths were in infinity; the beginning, whose end was immortality.

Which of our young readers would, if she could choose, exchange the trials and death of Mariamne for the prosperous and unchecked career of Salome? The inward answer contained in the *first* thought would reveal the real state of the heart and soul to their youthful owner. We ask not the reply, for none could truly give it. Those who know not, and have never *studied* humanity, would loudly condemn the very suspicion, that preference could be accorded to the *career* (remember we do not say the character) of Salome; but the earnest and heart-felt student of humanity knows that the human heart of *itself* is but too often "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." And though religion and education, vitalized by the grace of God, can and will subdue these natural inclinations, still it is only inward questions such as these which will reveal whether indeed every seed of evil has been trampled down and rooted out. And, therefore, is it good so to cultivate self-knowledge, that even the characters of ages past may aid us on through the dark and dangerous paths of our present life!

The sinfulness of Salome would warn us from such choice: but there may be many youthful hearts to think and feel, that to be prosperous is not always to be wicked—to pass through life without trial, does not always prove our non-acceptance with the Lord. And they are right: but our question condenses itself into simply this—would we choose a life of prosperity and joy *without* religion—*without* that internal communing with our Father in heaven which bids us think of, and fits us for heaven; or a life of trial *with it*, with that religion which not only *sustains* but *blesses*—which gives us joy in the very midst of grief, strength in the midst of weakness, hope beyond the grave, in the dark shadow of death—assurances of unending love in loneliness, of sympathy in misconception and suspicion, of one who will never leave us nor forsake, however every friend departs

by change or death, of that realization of immortality, which bids us walk this world as a bird that passeth, and in his very resting sees afar, and yearneth for his native clime. According to the inward answer, so are our hearts right or wrong, in their secret thoughts of God.

Such were the trials, and such the infused strength of Mariamne. As a woman of Israel—to whom these things were known and felt by the faithful, far more vividly then than now—we may rest assured that her pure chastity, her high sense of rectitude, her unvarying truth and collected dignity, in the very midst of trials and temptations, which in those dark times must have morally and spiritually lowered any ordinary woman, had their foundation and constancy in religion alone. Nothing else could have sustained her, or withheld her so completely from the committal of a single fault, or even venial error, which could throw a shadow on her name. To realize to the full the beauty of her character, we must think of the age in which she lived—the wickedness with which she was surrounded—the false notions of right and wrong with which her own mother sought to mislead her unguarded youth—the laxity of morals, even in Judea, from her amalgamation with the heathen nations—and the intensity of suffering to which as a wife and sister, queen and mother, she was so constantly and cruelly exposed—these considerations, added to her extreme youth, must excite our love and admiration yet more than our pity, for we know that her death was not only the cessation of sorrow, but the commencement of an eternity of bliss. "To believe in the heroic makes heroes," we have lately read; and there is a world of solid truth in those brief words: and even so, to *admire* virtue with the pure fresh feelings of the unsophisticated heart, will *excite* to virtuous deeds. The trials of the wife of Herod are no longer ours to encounter; but without trial who may pass through life? And oh, however deceived, insulted, wearied, let us never stoop to use the weapons of revenge, but calmly and steadily pursue our suffering course, as pure, as true, as nobly, as Mariamne!

Before entirely leaving this subject, we will take a hasty glance over the fate of the characters so intimately connected with the history of Mariamne.

Herod's after career will be found in the historians of the times—suffice it to state here, that if ever retribution were permitted to be visible in this world, we can trace it in the tortures,

physical and mental, which afflicted him, from the moment of his wife's murder, to his own death, not only as concerned him individually, but in the continued plots and misery which, through the fiendish machinations of Salome, devastated his household.

A pestilential disease breaking out just after Mariamne's murder, and carrying off immense numbers, appears to have been so universally felt as Divine vengeance and wrath for the iniquitous deed, that her innocence, if it had ever been doubted, must from that moment have been publicly acknowledged, and Herod regarded with increased loathing as her unjustifiable murderer. Overpowered by mental agony, he went from place to place, from solitude to solitude, in the vain search for peace. The body succumbed to the torture of the mind, and a fierce incurable disease seizing him while at Samaria, confined him there for several months, and without any intermission of pain.

The mother who could insult her innocent and only child on her way to death—who could at such a moment think only of endeavoring to preserve her own life, and seek to do so by false accusations of her own offspring—was not likely to be much affected by her loss. No misfortune, no bereavement, no personal imprisonment, appears to have had any effect in decreasing that fearful thirst for ambition which was the secret origin of all Alexandra's own crimes, and much of her children's misery. Hearing of Herod's incurable distemper at Samaria, she commenced her machinations by endeavoring to obtain possession of the fortifications of Jerusalem, in which place she resided. One of these commanded the Temple; and she knew if this were obtained, the whole nation would be in her power; for without the temple there could be no sacrifices, and without these daily holocausts, universal rebellion would inevitably ensue. These strongholds she demanded in the name of Mariamne's sons, on the plea of guarding them for the young princes, in case of their father's death. The link, however, which had in former times united the populace to Alexandra, had been snapt asunder by the death of Mariamne. There could be no belief in her fidelity to the interests of her grandsons, when her unnatural conduct to her own child was remembered, and she was now yet more an object of popular hate and indignation than Herod himself. Her schemes were all frustrated—first by the positive refusal of the governor of the fortifications to take any step in

the actual death of the king; and secondly, and still more effectually, by the betrayal of her machinations: and Herod, though scarcely able to move or breathe from physical torture, gave instant orders for her execution.

The fate of Alexandra was, then, the same as Mariamne's; but how differently do we regard it! Her restless intrigues, caring for neither sin nor shame in their accomplishment; her fearful ambition always ending in destruction to the innocent, as well as to herself; her entire want of all human feelings, from first to last, save in her grief for Aristobulus, and those, too, her after conduct bids us trace more to the agony of mortified ambition than of maternal bereavement, all compel us actually to recoil from the contemplation of her character, and deprive us of all sympathy in her fate.

Had she been other than she was—had she taught her proud spirit submission, and sought to conciliate, not offend, the female members of Herod's family, much of misery, both for Mariamne and herself, might have been averted. We can derive no individual lesson from her history, save of warning, lest the temptations of this world, luxury and worldliness, the petty ambition of rivalry in riches and appearance, prejudice and envy, should distort the fair sweet coloring of humanity, and clothe up our hearts in the icy mail of selfishness and pride. Alexandra was not by nature and constitution different from other women; but the seeds of sin, of which circumstances and education prevent our very consciousness, in her obtained ascendency, and crushed all of human feeling and womanly tenderness, beneath their poisonous and overspreading weeds.

Her intrigues and ambition, however, are strong confirmatory proofs of the social position of the Women of Israel in her time. We see she had full liberty to scheme and act, and endeavor, in more than one instance, to put herself forward in actual opposition to the mighty and magnificent Herod, powerful as he was in himself, and courted by all foreign states. That she never succeeded, showed, indeed, the weakness of her cause, but not the debasement of her social condition. There could have been no law existing, either written or oral, to the disparagement of women at the time, or her natural position would have rendered her too powerless and insignificant even for the formation of intrigues, much less to permit their importance in the eyes of Herod, and consequent persecution of herself.

The mother of Herod is mentioned no more in history, and not being a woman of Israel, we are not even bound to follow Salome's sinful course any further; but for the completion of the history, we will sketch briefly as may be, the continuance of her career. Her first public act after the death of her victim, for such undoubtedly Mariamne was, was in defiance of all Jewish law and womanly delicacy, to send a bill of divorce to her husband Costabarus, with whom she had quarrelled, excusing the deed to Herod by telling him that it was for his sake she had thus acted; having discovered that Costabarus had joined in a conspiracy against him, and had also preserved alive, in direct contradiction to Herod's orders (issued twelve years before), the sons of Babas, men of the Asmonæan line, and in great favor with the multitude. Being found in the place designated by Salome, they were all slain; and Costabarus, with four other of Herod's intimate friends, executed on Salome's charge. The sons of Babas were the very last even distantly connected with the Maccabæan line; and Herod now reigned unencumbered with a single remaining family of sufficient rank and dignity to interfere with or prevent his denationalization of Judæa.

Sixteen or eighteen years passed, and we read nothing of Salome; but from the moment of Alexander's and Aristobulus' return to Judæa her hatred against Mariamne seemed rekindled towards her sons, and her machinations recommenced. The young princes had been educated at Rome, and were received by the Jewish population with such enthusiastic delight as appears to have reawakened the old hatred of the Asmonean line. The princes bore in their majestic mien and noble features, all the characteristics of their mother's race. The intervening years seem to have had as little power to deaden the people's love for their native princes as to diminish Salome's hate. They could scarcely have arrived at Jerusalem ere the calumnies and suspicions against them commenced, not indeed as yet conveyed to Herod by his sister, but reports raised abroad, that they had been heard to speak reproachfully against their father as their mother's murderer, and boldly to assert their own belief in her innocence and virtue. These rumors of course reached Herod's ear, and reviving all the thoughts and tortures of previous years, shook the affection he was beginning to feel towards his sons, and his naturally jealous and suspicious temper regained ascendency.

Still, though shaken, he pursued his more kindly intention

towards his sons, marrying both with great splendor, to wives of their own rank; Alexander, to Glaphyra, daughter of Archelaus, king of Cappadocia, a union which, if approved of by the people, clearly demonstrates how completely the Laws of Moses were put aside or observed, according to the caprice of the king, and how little that power can be supposed to realize the promises of the prophets: Aristobulus to Berenice, the daughter of Salome. That she should consent to give her daughter to a man she hated, and whose destruction she had resolved to compass, may excite some surprise, but is fully explained by the issue. Whether the princess Berenice's affections were excited towards her husband, or not, we know not; but even had they been, Salome herself was too completely void of any human or womanly feeling, to permit such affection to interfere with her designs, or care for the suffering which in that case she inflicted on her child. She permitted, nay, probably proposed the union, to obtain a spy on Aristobulus' most private moments and most unguarded words; and that Berenice could be *persuaded*, as Josephus tells us, into "ill-nature" against her husband, and to "gratify *her mother*," forge the most improbable tales concerning her husband's private speeches, argues but too painfully that the character of Salome found its reflection in her daughter; and Berenice married Aristobulus not from affection, but only to aid her mother's plans.

We have no space, nor is this the work, to dilate on all the fearful machinations pursued by Salome and her party, against these ill-fated young men. The unsuspicious candor, the open independence, and courageous assertion of their mother's honor, against all who purposely assailed it, were no match for the fiendish subtlety which marked every word and movement of Salome. They actually regarded her as their best friend, at the very period that her every energy was used in maddening the king against them, till he himself urged on their destruction with the violence and hatred of a demon. The law of Moses, totally disregarded in the condemnation of Mariamne, and the marriage of Alexander with a heathen, was now used by the infatuated father as a reason for his demanding the execution of his sons.* For five or seven years these machinations worked ere their end was accomplished by the actual destruction of the

* Josephus, Antiquities, book xvi. chap. xi.

victims; and during that interval, the most awful state of suspicion from one man to another, obtained possession not of the court alone, but of the whole population. Executions were constantly occurring. Men accused, however innocent, and tortured into confessions of guilt, which included many others—dark doubts of friend against friend—brother against brother—till all of nature itself and human affections appeared to succumb beneath the baleful influence of suspicion and distrust; and all this was a woman's work, and originated in a woman's hate, called forth by the petty feelings of jealousy and envy.

In Josephus we find an elaborate, in Milman a clear and succinct account of this fearful period of Herod's reign. To these we refer our readers: suffice it here to state, that Salome's hate was gratified. The gifted and accomplished sons of Mariamne shared their mother's fate: and though the dark deed recoiled with horror and murder on many of its perpetrators, Salome herself remained uninjured by the shock, spared to work out her own destiny, and in another world receive its recompense.

But let it not be imagined that hate and its concomitant desire of injury were the only characteristics of Salome; her life was one continued course of intrigue, alike political and personal. We do not linger on them; for there can be neither profit nor pleasure in so doing. Her treatment of Costabarus we already know; and before she was married to Alexas, some years afterwards, her conduct had been such as to excite the shame and abhorrence of even those licentious times. Her third husband was Alexas, one of Herod's favorites, and with him she appears to have lived more peacefully and honorably than with his predecessors. That, with all her fearful deeds and thoughts, she was a woman of masculine intellect and immense capability, is proved by the consummate skill and talent with which she always contrived and carried out her nefarious plans. Often in danger, but never outwitted, she repeatedly saw her companions in iniquity fall victims to their own arts against others, while she herself remained untouched and unsuspected. None but a clever woman could so have intrigued, and kept up such a continued course of fraud, deceit, and falsehood, without ever injuring herself. But how fearfully do those very talents and capabilities increase her responsibility and her guilt!

The only act recorded of her of a somewhat superior nature to those we have touched upon, was her releasing from the Hippo-

drome all those Jewish nobles and elders whom Herod had collected there, commanding them to be slain the moment of his own death, that there might be a general mourning in Judea. Before the king's death was publicly known, Salome and Alexas gave them freedom, desiring them, in Herod's name, to return to their own lands. Remembering the character of Salome we must believe this action, like all the rest, had its origin in policy not in goodness. Had obedience to Herod's command been equally politic, we should undoubtedly have read of their execution instead of their release.

So skilfully had she contrived to retain her brother's affections, that, though it was to her machinations alone he actually owed all his domestic, and consequent mental misery, Herod remembered her largely in his will, leaving her the cities of Jamnia, Ashdod, and Phasaelis, with five hundred thousand drachmæ in silver. To her too was intrusted his letter to the soldiery, thanking them for their fidelity to himself, and exhorting them to grant the same to his son, Archelaus, whom he had appointed king. Salome read it herself to the soldiery, whom her commands had mustered in the amphitheatre, and the appointment was received with acclamations.

But our intrigues were not yet over. A sedition in Jerusalem, soon after the accession of Archelaus, though subdued and punished, urged the young monarch to journey to Rome, there to defend his conduct, and obtain the confirmation of his father's will. Thither Salome and her whole family accompanied him, ostensibly to use her influence with Augustus in his favor, secretly to work against him, by encouraging Antipas, another of Herod's sons, to come to Rome, and promising him her aid with the emperor to displace his brother. False charges were accordingly brought against Archelaus by a son of Salome, as subtle and intriguing as his mother; and after a variety of delays and pleadings, Archelaus was appointed by the emperor ethnarch over half the territory left him by Herod (a poor substitute for the title and power of king), and the remainder divided between two of his brothers, Philip and Antipas. Here again we trace the workings of Salome's intrigues, paving the way for the complete reduction to a Roman province of that beautiful land which her brother had so strenuously sought to denationalize. With herself, all prospered. Besides confirming to her the legacy of her brother,

Augustus conferred the royal residence of Askelon; and alternately here and at Rome she seems to have passed the remaining years of her existence.

As we do not read any further record of her interference in the government, we are to suppose that she confined her subtilty to more private life. She lived long enough to behold the transient kingdom of Herod swallowed up in the dominion of the Romans: her nationality, her glory, her laws, all trampled underfoot by the heathen power that overran the land. But to Salome this must have been rather a source of rejoicing than of grief. Judging by her acts, she never loved Judæa, nay, had shared her brother's resolution to hurl it from its proud supremacy as the chosen kingdom of the Lord; and this was done. The banishment of Archelaus gave the government into the hands of Roman procurators; and two years afterwards Salome closed her iniquitous career, leaving all her cities to the empress Julia, thus confirming our assertion, that neither by birth nor adoption, character nor feeling, was she a daughter of Jerusalem.

Glad to quit such a subject of dissatisfaction and pain, we leave to our readers' own minds all reflections on the character of Salome, bidding them only remember that, awful as is the picture of female depravity, it is *truth*, not *fiction*, and therefore demands our serious consideration as to the origin of these over-spreading crimes. The seeds of wickedness are so small as to be invisible, religion only can destroy them ere they are discovered; and Salome knew not GOD.

CHAPTER X.

HELENA, QUEEN OF ADIABENE.—BERENICE.

THIRTY years passed: the miseries of Judæa and her hapless people increased. The Law of Moses was still, indeed, the religion of the country; in some hearts pure and spiritual

as it had been given, in others burdened with superstition, violence, and minutiæ wholly foreign to its beautiful consistency: in others fast giving place to the customs and habits of the Romans. Darkness—moral, intellectual, and spiritual—had gathered over the nation as a whole. God had left them in His wrath to pursue their own hardened course; but even at this period, when the true religion seemed fast fading from the earth, a ray of reviving lustre beamed exactly in confirmation of the consoling theory, that God never leaves Himself without witnesses upon earth.

Helena, queen of Adiabene, a district beyond the Tigris, had embraced Judaism. An independent sovereign, whose dominion over her own subjects was absolute, and whose actions owned no supremacy but her own will, this act must have been both voluntary and from conviction. It could have no ulterior motive in ambition, for Judæa was not only under iron subjection to the Romans, but devastated by famine and disease. Izates, the son of Helena, had been sent by his father, Monobazus, to be educated at the court of Abenerig, king of Characene, a district on the Persian Gulf. While there, he became acquainted with Ananias, a Hebrew merchant, who, in his commercial character, had frequent access to the women's apartments, and never lost an opportunity of inculcating the tenets of his faith. Izates, who had married the daughter of Abenerig, appears to have been present at these conferences, and also became a convert, by a curious coincidence, at the very time that his mother, Helena, embraced the religion also. So earnest was Izates in the cause, that, on his return to his country, and accession, after his father's death, he insisted on being received into the covenant of Abraham, against the advice of his mother, and even Ananias, who appears to have accompanied the young monarch as his chosen counsellor and friend. Izates had not the right of primogeniture to his father's crown; and knowing that he had very many enemies in the partisans of his brothers, Helena, though an earnest convert herself, feared that such a public departure from the religion of his country would create sedition and rebellion in his people. Izates at first yielded to her counsel; but his inclinations receiving fresh incentive from the representations of Eleazar, a learned Galilæan Jew, and his own impressions of a frequent and earnest study of the Law of Moses, he was

received into the covenant of Abraham, and no evils followed; for, to use here the words of Josephus, "it was God who hindered what they feared from taking effect, and preserved both Izates himself and his sons from many dangers, and procured their deliverance when it seemed impossible, demonstrating thereby that the fruit of piety does not perish, for those who have regard for Him, and for their faith upon Him only.*

But Helena's conversion is of more importance to our present subject than that of Izates. Her zeal was so earnest, her faith so heartfelt, that, when her natural anxiety was calmed by the peace and prosperity which followed her son's profession of Judaism, she requested his permission to make a journey to Jerusalem, and worship at the holy temple there. This was, at that time, no trifling undertaking. Travelling was dangerous and fatiguing; Judæa in constant petty warfare, and almost exhausted by a severe and long-continued famine. But Helena, who appears a woman of great energy, did not hesitate to incur all these evils, so that she could but offer her sacrifice of thanksgiving in the chosen house of God. Izates readily acceded, making lavish preparations for her journey according to her rank, bestowing on her large sums of money; and, in the true spirit of the religion they had both professed, which so inculcated filial respect and love, he himself accompanied her great part of her journey.

The famine raging in Jerusalem would have terrified away any less zealous convert; but Helena quietly took up her abode in the distressed city, making it her business to relieve the sufferers by munificent gifts both of food and money. She despatched some of her household to Alexandria to purchase large quantities of corn, and others to Cyprus, for a cargo of dried figs; and, both missions accomplished with unusual promptness, and relief most judiciously bestowed, the memory of Queen Helena long lingered with the oppressed people; and her acts are recorded by Josephus with a feeling and impressiveness which are not often found in his details. Izates too, on being informed of the famine, sent large sums to the principal men in Jerusalem. Both himself and his mother appeared eager to demonstrate the truth and sincerity of their conversion,

* Josephus, Ant. b. xx. c. 2.

by their earnest endeavors for the good of the Jewish people; a striking contrast to the conduct of those Idumæan proselytes, whose only desire had been to Romanize the people, and amalgamate with the heathen both their religion and their land.

How long Helena dwelt in Jerusalem does not appear; but, from the good she accomplished, and the magnificent tombs, or pyramids, which she erected about three furlongs from Jerusalem, we are led to suppose that she had adopted the country as well as the religion for her own, and dwelt there the greater portion of the remainder of her life. Her strong affection for Izates demanded a powerful incentive to her living apart from him, and that incentive appears to have been, the delight of worshipping the Eternal in his temple; the privileges of obeying every tittle of his law more faithfully and precisely than she could have done in her own land; and the constant kindness and good works to the Hebrew people, with which she proved her piety and zeal. The death of Izates, after a prosperous reign of twenty-four years, caused the deepest affliction to his mother, for not only were they bound together by the adoption of the same creed, which drew the human affections still closer than merely natural ties; but Josephus alludes to him as a most dutiful and affectionate son. One consolation, however, she had; the privileges and principles of Judaism were not all lost to her country, by the death of Izates. The crown of Adiabene went to Monobazus, her eldest son, who had also embraced Judaism; and Helena, though aged and infirm, and bowed down by her sad bereavement, hastened to Adiabene, to congratulate and bless him on his accession. Izates had left the crown to his brother, instead of to either of his own sons, in gratitude for the fidelity and affection which, although put aside for the accession of a younger brother, Monobazus had always proved. Helena, however, did not long survive Izates; she died at Adiabene. And Monobazus, in dutiful obedience to the last wishes of his mother and brother, had their remains transported to Jerusalem, where they were interred in the splendid mausoleum erected by Helena, no doubt with that intent.

The history of Helena is a refreshing picture of feminine gentleness and family love, after the fearful deeds and characters we have of late perused. There is a gentle womanly disposition, apparent even in her appeal to the people after her husband's death, a horror of violence and severity, peculiarly

consisting with her true feminine qualities: "I believe you are not unacquainted, that my husband was desirous that Izates should succeed him in the government, and thought him not unworthy so to do," was her calm address, whose only eloquence was sincerity and truth. "However, I wait your determination, for happy is he who receives a kingdom not from a single person only, but from the willing suffrages of a great many."

When the *amour propre* of a nation is thus conciliated, their decision is generally sure to be the decision desired. Unanimously they pressed forward to pay homage to their queen, and confirm their late king's resolution, advising at the same time the death of all the brethren and kinsmen of Izates, to secure him on the throne. But Helena's gentle spirit shrank from so fearful a deed, though of Izates' brethren only one was her own son. She calmed the popular excitement, by thanking them for their zeal, but desiring them to postpone such violent measures till Izates returned, and should himself think them expedient. The multitude consented, only exhorting her to restrain them in bonds for their own security, till the arrival of Izates, and to set up some one in whom she could place perfect trust, as regent of the kingdom in the meantime. Had Helena been an ambitious, or a politic and suspicious woman, it would have been very easy for her to have retained the regency herself; and had she not had perfect trust in the honor and affection of her eldest son, both for herself and Izates, she could not have confided the kingly power to his keeping, even placing the diadem upon his head, and the signet on his hand, endowing him with full powers as sovereign till Izates' return. Few characters could have sustained this ordeal, and resigned a power, the sweets of which had been fully tasted, to a younger brother; yet Monobazus did so: and in this very deed, and in the confidence and affection existing uninterruptedly between the brothers throughout their lives, as in the beauty and unselfish honesty of their mutual characters, we read a still clearer commentary on the true character of their mother, than in her own acts, gentle and full of beauty as they were.

None but a mother's judicious training and impartial love could so have united her sons, that the elder could submit to the superiority of the younger without jealousy and resistance. Milman, indeed, attributes to the sedition of Monobazus, the attacks of the Arabian and Parthian kings; but as Josephus, who

might have been living at the very time of these events, does not give us any warrant for the surmise, we reject it altogether. According to him, it was the desire of Monobazus, and other of the king's kindred, to become Jews, which roused the Adiabenians to revolt, and to invite foreign potentates against their king. In fact, every war in which Izates was engaged, originated in the annoyance of his subjects at his embracing Judaism; but he remained firm and unshaken in the religion, embraced not from ambition but conviction, and he triumphed over both foreign and domestic foes.

The character of Helena would have ornamented any religion; but we can discern throughout it the pure spirituality at that period only discoverable in the religion of the Lord. Her disposition naturally clinging and gentle, her heart capable of the strongest emotions, her mind constantly urging to the good, could not rest satisfied with Heathen worship. She was instructed in the Jewish tenets; their spirituality, their temporal consolation, their eternal hope, and infinite love; their vast capabilities for exercising the intellect and heart, filled up the void which Heathenism could not; and Helena believed: and she bore witness, throughout the whole tenor of her after life, to the sincerity and purity of that belief.

Now would this, could this conversion have taken place, if the Jewish religion degraded women to the rank of slaves and heathens? This single story would be sufficient to prove the groundless falsity of the charge. Helena was a powerful and respected queen and mother in her own nation, accustomed to receive homage, to be consulted, to make use of her intellect and political sagacity; to take, in fact, a higher and more esteemed grade than was the general condition of Heathen women; and is it likely she would sacrifice all these privileges of sex and station, by the adoption of a religion which deprived her of both? What would have been the use of her conversion, if there were any ground for the false assertion that women have no souls, and neither the form nor the spirit of religion is incumbent upon them? Had her conversion taken place when Israel was at the height of her temporal and spiritual glory—when a world acknowledged her holy supremacy, and sought her friendship as a land divinely favored—there might have been a doubt allowable as to whether Helena sought the safety and increase of her temporal dominions in the public profession

of Judaism; but no such doubt can attach itself to the purity of her motives when we reflect on the then position of Judea. There could be neither glory nor satisfaction in uniting herself with a nation sunk to the very lowest ebb of degradation, hovering, as it were, on the very brink of annihilation. But one motive could have actuated her; and that was the natural craving for a revealed religion, peculiar to dispositions such as hers. But Judaism would not have satisfied those cravings, if it really were the stern, harsh, exclusive superstition which it is by some proclaimed; if its ordinances were for man, and woman were a mere cypher in its laws. But such Judaism was unknown, till the slanders of modern times so reported it. Helena read in the Law of Moses the tender, pitying care of woman, in all her varied relations and positions of life, as we have endeavored to display it in our Second Period. She read that a Father had promised a place in His house, dearer even than sons and daughters, to all who kept His sabbaths and embraced His covenants, and therefore it was she believed; and in her earnest zeal parted from her beloved children, left a home of peace and luxury, where she was known, respected, loved—to journey many toilsome and weary leagues, only for the happiness of sacrificing offerings of thanksgiving to the Lord of Hosts, who had in His mercy given her the knowledge of Himself. Famine and misery were around her in Jerusalem; she must have seen many painful evidences that the holy religion she had embraced was desecrated by its own offspring; that social iniquities and individual apostasies were throwing a dark barrier between the Jew and his God; yet she never wavered, devoting her fortune and her energies to deeds of kindness, charity, and love; thus proving how completely she had become one with the people whose religion she professed.

If woman were prohibited the privilege of sacrifice, etc., is it likely we should find Josephus recording the visit of a female proselyte to Jerusalem for that sole purpose? or Helena herself so anxious to obey the ordinances of the Law? It is needless to continue the argument, the fact contains in itself the strongest refutation of the charge levelled by the ignorant against us. The prejudices of education may endear even superstition or heathenism to its votaries themselves; but we may rest assured that no woman, respected and elevated by the customs and habits of her original creed and native subjects, would *volunta-*

rily adopt another tending to enslave and to debase her. Helena's virtue and intellect had raised her above her nation and her age, occasioning a void and loneliness which urged her to seek and find repose in unusual studies. To define the void might have been even to herself impossible, until the word of God, explained by an earnest and pious Israelite, at once revealed and filled it; and in its inexhaustible fullness satisfied her woman heart on earth, and pointed with an angel-finger to another world, where all the pantings of intellect and affection would find sufficiency and rest; and hope, yet dearer, where she and her beloved ones would meet again, and be with Israel's God for ever! To some women (Salome and Alexandra for instance), these considerations would be of little value; but to characters such as Helena of Adiabene, they would mark their immortal truth, in the glow of joy and blissful calm inseparable from real religious faith, pervading for the first time an awakened human heart.

The first year of the Jewish war, 66 of the Christian era, presents us with a striking illustration of the Hebrew female's capability and freedom to make and to fulfil singular vows. The fact is briefly recorded, and trifling in itself, but important, as the only instance of the kind mentioned in our history. That there were many others, is more than likely. No law was instituted by our great lawgiver which had not its practical illustration in the history of his people. Nor would the law of vows of either kind, "singular or Nazarite," have formed part of the given code, if their necessity had not been visible in the wants and customs of the multitude. That we have only one recorded instance of its obedience by a woman of Israel, does not prove its previous disuse, but that those who had occasion to make and fulfil singular vows, were in too domestic and retired a position to obtain the notice of the historian. The manner in which Josephus alludes to it, marks it of frequent, not of singular occurrence, a custom in fact of the nation, in case of "distempers or other distresses."*

The subject of this "singular vow" is one that we may perhaps be blamed for introducing into our pages, her character, according to some of the Latin historians, being of doubtful

* Josephus's Wars, book ii. ch. 15.

reputation. As, however, this calumny cannot be proved—as, being a woman of Israel by birth and creed, she was an object of prejudice and aversion to the Romans; and as the satirists then, as now, hesitated not to calumniate innocence and blacken reputation, only to provide themselves with a jest—we are not bound to credit the assertions of either class of writers. A glance over the appendix to the fifth book of Tacitus's History will show the unfavorable light in which his nation was accustomed to regard the belief, customs, and ordinances of Judaism; and, therefore, it is more than likely that the very fact of Berenice being a Jewish woman unusually beautiful and gifted, admired by Vespasian, and actually beloved and nearly wedded by Titus, should have excited the extreme jealousy of the Romans, from which calumny and suspicion, however base and unfounded, are sure to proceed.

Josephus, whose history favors the Romans, and adopts their views as much as possible, of course insinuates the same scandal, which, however, he never attempts to *prove;* and the only instance in which he does bring Berenice forward, is not only in a womanly and amiable, but in a religious and patriotic light. Had this not been the case, we should have left her to the general historian; but as that void in our records is rapidly advancing, where there is scarcely any mention of individuals, male or female, and the history of the women of Israel is lost in the fearful vortex of national misery and subsequent dispersion, we are glad to seize the faintest and most unfinished notice, which can in any point confirm our theory and illustrate our laws.

One fact also, our readers must bear in mind; the period in which the object of our present notice existed was one of the grossest immorality. Custom authorized in many nations, actually *legalized* marriages, which, in the earlier stages of the world, and when the law of God was established and followed, had been regarded, as they would be now, most unlawful and impure. The religion of the Hebrews existed but in name. From the reign of Herod, the denationalization commenced. After his death, Roman procurators governed and Roman soldiers over-ran the land; and such an awful spirit of party divided the Jews who yet remained, that the neutrals believed the dominion of the Romans far less evil than the divisions and seditions of their own. At such an epoch, all statutes, human and divine, were set aside; a man did as his neighbor did, and custom

alone was law. The pure beautiful ordinances, prohibiting too near consanguinity in the marriage ties, were completely laid aside by the once holy nation for whom they were framed; and the family of Herod appeared resolved on assisting their father's plans for Romanizing the Jewish people, by emulating all the heathen nations in their utter indifference to the laws of marriage,* and framing unions regardless of the ties of relationship formerly restraining them. The union of brother and sister, horrible as it reads to us, was then in constant practice amongst the Egyptians, Syrians, Parthians, and occasionally amongst the more refined and polished Romans themselves. *Nationally*, this was an awful state of society, calling down always the visible wrath and chastisement of the Eternal, in the annihilation of their sinning nations. *Individually*, the crime was of far less magnitude; for many sinned unconsciously, and the horror and loathing with which we look upon these things could not have been felt by those to whom custom was authority,—example, law.

We do not write this to excuse Israel's sinful departure from the law of Moses: we know the awful magnitude of their iniquities by the appalling nature of their chastisement. We simply mention the fact, to remove what would now appear the extreme sinfulness of Berenice, if the reports against her had foundation; which foundation, search history as we may, we cannot find. Nay, in the extreme laxity of morals and multitude of impure connexions, we read the probable rise and only source of the rumors. Neither satirists nor prejudiced historians were likely to draw a line between unproved rumor and proved reality; and it was enough for them that Berenice was a beautiful Jewess, to burden her with charges, frivolous and light to them, but throwing a stain upon her reputation, the blackness of which could scarcely be known till discovered by the reading of modern times.

The records of the great-grand-daughter of Mariamne are so brief and so little satisfactory, that all we can give is a simple statement of what is not very generally known concerning her; her parentage and connexions; making the link uniting her with Jewish and Roman history more distinct than can be the

* Josephus's Antiq. book xviii. ch. 5 and note.

case with mere general researches: and then revert to the circumstance which is the occasion of this notice.

We have already alluded to the two sons of Mariamne, Aristobulus and Alexander, and to their marriages; the former with his cousin, Berenice, Salome's daughter—the latter with Glaphyra of Cappadocia. Aristobulus left five children, two of whom were, Agrippa, afterwards king of Judea, and Herod, king of Chalcis. Agrippa, himself a grandson of Mariamne, married Cypros, a grand-daughter of the same princess by her daughter Salampsio. By this Cypros, King Agrippa had five children, two sons—one of whom, Drusus, died young, the other known as the young Agrippa, was the last of the Idumæans who even nominally was king of the Jews,—and three daughters, Berenice, the object of our sketch, Mariamne, and Drusilla. Berenice was then great-grand-daughter to Mariamne by both her parents, and seems to have inherited all the grace and beauty of the Asmonæan family. In Jewish households there never was any distinction made between the education of sons and daughters; both equally shared the care and instructions of their mother, who, were she a "Woman of Israel," was always, or ought to have been, perfectly competent to the task. We find in the Talmud repeated ordinances to this effect—even so far as to say, "that if a man marries a woman without education, and only for her money, he will not have children according to his wishes," thus giving an illustration of the laws which we insisted upon in our Second Period, as including mothers equally with fathers in the education of their children.

The close connexion of brother and sister we have already seen in our notice of Aristobulus and Mariamne, and also, though in a very opposite light, of Herod and Salome, and some other instances. Sisters were never nonentities in the Jewish state; they always shared, not the affection alone, but the rank and influence of their brothers, and were looked on by the multitude in a much superior light to the female scions of royalty in more modern times. From the extreme care of woman in the Jewish laws, the celebrated characters which, as women, had swelled their history, the custom for females to inherit when there were no males, the successior of a wife to the crown in preference to the sons, all elevated the position of royal females to a perfect equality, socially considered, with

their husbands and brothers, and brought them more forward in the history of their people than is generally believed.

We are anxious to mark this important fact, because it will throw light on the true position of Berenice, which, from being misunderstood by the mere chronicler of the age, is of course misrepresented, and so mystifies his readers equally with himself.

There scarcely appears a year's difference in the ages of Herod Agrippa's elder children, the young Agrippa and Berenice,* and they were, therefore, thrown together as intimately and fondly as Aristobulus and Mariamne, probably accompanying their father and mother in all their wanderings, sharing their vicissitudes, and educated together in Rome. There were six years between Berenice and her next sister, Mariamne, and four between Mariamne and Drusilla; consequently Berenice could have had no companion in her own family except her brother, with whom Agrippa the elder appears always to have associated her. We suppose this from a sentence in Josephus,† which we transcribe. Alluding to a slave, from whom Agrippa had received a trifling kindness, he says, "When afterwards Agrippa was come to the kingdom, he took particular care of Thaumastus, and got him his liberty from Caius, and made him his steward over his own estates; and when he died *he left him to Agrippa, his son, and to Berenice, his daughter, to minister to them* in the same capacity."

Now, unless Berenice had been, by her father's will, associated with her brother in the possession and government of these estates, there would have been no need to mention her name in conjunction with Agrippa's in so simple a thing as the retaining a faithful servant in his post. In reading the unsatisfactory annals of the general historians, we must reason by analogy, or be for ever groping in the dark, searching for minute but important facts, and never successful in the search. It must have been a habit and a common judgment with the father, to associate his elder children, as mutually and equally concerned in his public and private affairs, or this charge would not have been so naturally left. We have the confirmation of this suggestion in later notices of Berenice; but the historians of that period forget the sentence we have quoted, though that in itself

* Josephus, Antiq., book xix. ch. 9. † Ibid. book xviii. ch. 6.

is sufficient to account for her influence with Agrippa in the government, and needs no supposition whatever of a nearer connexion between them.

The first person to whom Berenice appears to have been betrothed was Marcus, according to Josephus, a son of Alexander Lysimachus, an alabarch who had been imprisoned by Caligula, and set at liberty and restored to all his former honors by Claudius, whose intimate friend he was. As Berenice was, however, only fifteen, if so much, when her father gave her in marriage to her uncle, Herod of Chalcis, this could not have been more than a betrothal entered into while they were children, as was frequently the custom, but which Marcus did not live to complete. The intended union, however, is sufficient proof how little nationality existed in the heart of Agrippa at that period. His varied life had naturally occasioned this, though he appears to have governed his kingdom during his brief reign with all the feelings of a Hebrew, and to have inculcated the same in the hearts of his children.

Berenice was the second wife of Herod, whom Agrippa's influence with Claudius had, before he gave him his daughter, made king of Chalcis. His first had been Mariamne, granddaughter of Herod the Great and his Samaritan wife, Malthæa. Berenice appears to have enjoyed six years of a happy, though uneventful, wedded life with Herod, becoming the mother of two sons, Berenicianus and Hyrcanus. Her residence seems, however, to have been more in the dominions of her father in Judea, than at Chalcis. Josephus repeatedly alludes to Herod of Chalcis, as if he were a constant attendant of Agrippa's court, which accounts for Berenice's interest in the people of Judea, and being, in fact, more intimately known to them than her brother Agrippa, who, for the last three years, had been finishing his education under Claudius Cæsar. Herod Agrippa died in 45; Berenice was then sixteen; and Herod of Chalcis, dying in 50, left her a young and beautiful widow of twenty-one. For fifteen or seventeen years she remained a widow, residing alternately at Rome and in Jerusalem. Her father's long residence in the former place, and intimate connexion and friendship with the highest Romans, of course made Rome her second country, and caused her to be as well known there as in Jerusalem. In 66 we find her in Jerusalem, in pursuance of her singular vow, and exposed to great danger from the infuriated Roman soldiery

(to both of which circumstances we will refer at the conclusion of our sketch). Between 66 and 69 she must have become queen of Pontus, by her marriage with Polemo, king of that country, an engagement entered into to silence the tongue of falsehood, which had dared charge her with an improper connexion with her brother. Before, however, she consented to the union, Polemo embraced Judaism, and was received into the covenant, a proof that even in that dark period of national apostasy some regard to religious decency was observed. In 69 we find her, as queen of Pontus, embracing the cause of Vespasian against his rival, Vitellius,* whom the Roman legions were endeavoring to elect emperor in Vespasian's stead, joining the confederacy in the latter's favor, and levying troops for his assistance.

Her marriage with Polemo, however, was not of long continuance. Entered into without love on either side, by her to prove the utter falsity of a scandalous rumor, by him to obtain possession of her riches, it was soon dissolved by mutual consent. Polemo repudiated his Judaism, only embraced for Berenice's gold; and Berenice returned to her life of freedom. Then it was she must have attracted the love of Titus; for it was in 73† that he would have married her, had he not feared the violent opposition of the Roman people, then more than usually incensed against the Jews, from the vast numbers of Romans who had perished in the Jewish war, and the daring and noble opposition to the imperial arms, which the miserable people had so very lately made.

Instead of marrying her (a dazzling destiny, which, to one educated in the Roman school, as had been Berenice, would have been difficult, if not impossible, to refuse, simply from national motives), Titus separated from her, and Berenice's life closed in retirement. Her name is not again mentioned in history, not even her subsequent residence, nor what was her final lot: this last female representative of the Idumæan and Asmonæan lines is lost to her posterity. We know that Agrippa lived and died the contented vassal of Rome; but of his sister, so nearly raised to become even empress of the world, this scanty detail is refused us; and we look in vain for her slightest

* Tacitus, Hist., book v., sect. 81.

† 73 according Tacitus—79 according to Goldsmith.

mention. This is disappointing; for, in the desolate condition of the Jews, their miseries, martyrdoms, massacres, and dispersions, we cannot form even an idea of her future destiny. Milman says, that "She returned some years afterwards to Rome, but never regained her former favor." In that case her residence was probably again with the beloved brother of her youth; and on this idea we can rest more satisfied than did we think of her homeless and wandering like the remainder of her wretched nation.

The sketch we have given is all that history, either Jewish or Roman, records in any connected point of view. Of her character we can learn little; but she appears to have been endowed with those superior qualities which gave her position and influence both with Jews and Romans. The occasion of her making the vow which she went to Jerusalem to perform, history does not mention. But that she did perform it, offering sacrifices for thirty days, is sufficient for us; by its strong confirmation of our assertion, that the Jewish religion elevated woman in all her religious duties and responsibilities to a perfect equality with man. Berenice, too, lived at the very time in which our opponents declare the religion of God had been so changed and abused by mistaken zealots, as imperatively to need reform and extermination, which Jesus was sent to accomplish. Whatever these zealots might have done, they certainly could not have deprived woman of her spiritual privileges, and denied her the power of either performing her vow or offering sacrifices, or Berenice would not have come to Jerusalem, then in a most awful state of misery and constant murders, expressly for the observance of the forms necessary to its fulfilment: nay, she could not have made the vow at all, if she had not had perfect liberty, spiritual and temporal, so to do.

This fact, then, is very important in our history, as women of Israel, and has nothing whatever to do with the private character of Berenice (which, however, we will endeavor to clear from the misrepresentations of historians). The fact, that the vow was taken by a widow in Israel, and observed in Jerusalem with all the attendant ceremonies enjoined by the priests, is enough in itself to prove that such vows *were* customary, and woman, as well as man, had the power to make and to fulfil them.

Nor in the thirty days' sacrifice, and going barefoot, which appears to have been the case with Berenice, can we discover what Whiston, in his note to this chapter of Josephus, supposes —the extreme rigor of Pharisaic ordinances. The permission to make vows, and the care lest females should be carried away by ill-regulated enthusiasm, is all that was ordained in the law of Moses—the *manner* of performing that vow, and the service or penance which its performance included, was left to the will of the subject, or, at his or her discretion, to the guidance of the priest. It was for this very reason, that the making and manner of fulfilling vows were to be entirely voluntary, that woman was compelled to have the sanction of father or husband. Such a vow, for instance, as Berenice's, would have been incompatible with the duty of a wife or daughter, and therefore probably not have received the necessary sanction of man, though the enthusiasm of the woman might have urged her to make it. Had the *manner* of performing vows been laid down by our great lawgiver, there would have been no need for him to have burdened woman's observance of them with a proviso, for the service or penance would have been ordained according to her *power* of obedience: but this would have interfered too closely with domestic and social freedom; and she was, therefore, permitted to make vows of service or penance, according to her own inclination, subservient only to the superior wisdom and calmer reasoning of her husband or father.

Berenice, at the time of her vow, was six-and-thirty years of age, a widow, and perfectly independent, both of will and action. She had neither father nor husband to interfere with her intentions—was of sufficient age to know well what she was about—of sufficient mental qualifications, and having been educated in Rome, without any of the exclusiveness of her own people, of sufficient freedom of thought in religious matters, not blindly to follow the instructions of priests, if they interfered with her own ideas; and, therefore, it is more than probable that the sacrifices and going barefoot were no orders of the priest, but Berenice's own voluntary adoption, the *manner* in which she chose to perform her "singular vow," and with which the priests interfered not, save in their sacred functions, to aid her in its performance. The riches of Berenice are more than once alluded to; and, therefore, the thirty days' sacrifice, although expensive, was quite within her power; and the going

barefoot, though revolting to our ideas of the religion of Moses, which ordained *loving obedience*, not *personal penance*, was then probably considered a mark of humility, and as revealing to the nation, that rank and station were not to interfere with the personal devotion to the Eternal, comprised in the making and observance of singular vows.

So much for Berenice's vow, as regards us nationally. As it regards her individually, it proves that, even while giving them what, in those times, was considered the advantages of a Roman education, Herod Agrippa must have taught them the religion of the Hebrews—made it a point with them—else we should never hear of Berenice deeming this singular vow was needed, or that it was absolutely necessary for Polemo, king of Pontus, to become a Jew before she married him. Nor, had she been educated in Roman principles only, would she have felt and acted as she did for her helpless people, during her residence in Jerusalem. Florus was then procurator of Judea, and governing with a mercilessness and ferocity, that at length caused the already full cup of Jewish forbearance and Jewish misery to run over. Imprisonments, scourgings, crucifixions, and massacres by wholesale, ceased not during the whole period of his authority. In one day 3,600 men, women, and children, fell unresisting victims: and neither rank, nor worth, nor even Roman citizenship—for some of the distinguished Jews had obtained equestrian rank—were spared; the highest suffering with the meanest, the worthy with the base.

Repeatedly had Berenice sent messengers—the most distinguished of her household—to intercede with Florus for her miserable countrymen; but, high as was her rank, influential as she was with his Roman masters, the monster heeded her not. Not even when, in her penitential attire, she herself stood before his tribunal, and sought by her own pleadings to check the torrent of his cruelty. Her hapless countrymen were hewn down before her very eyes; old age and helpless infancy,—the delicate female,—all perished; and she herself was in such imminent danger from the infuriate soldiery, as to be compelled to fly to the palace and collect her guards around, to shield herself from insult, as well as death. Yet she made no effort to quit Jerusalem, which she could have done with the greatest ease. Rather than fail in the performance of her vow, she shared the dangers of her countrymen:

living in daily dread of her own death, and in daily sight of misery and murder. Nor was she merely a passive witness she wrote the most touching accounts of the cruelty and rapacity of Florus, to his superior officer, Cestius Gallus, entreating his interference in behalf of her oppressed people; and when Agrippa returned, joined with him in every effort to reconcile the Jews and Romans, and so obtain for the former security and peace. She sat beside her brother during his memorable address, by her tears and silent eloquence betraying that her heart also was in his words; and even when, indignant at their ungrateful conduct to himself, Agrippa left the miserable city to itself, and returned to his own kingdom of Chalcis,* Berenice still seems to have lingered. Nor did she leave the country until her vow was fully performed, and Jerusalem in too fearful a state to admit of any hope of achieving or administering good.

Surely these are characteristics of an energetic, yet gentle, feeling woman. We can trace nothing, in this lowly adherence to a penitential vow and devotion to the interests of a miserable people, resembling the gay life and pleasure-loving propensities of a professed and alluring beauty. Josephus, indeed, accuses her of the unamiable qualities of annoying and ill-treating her youngest sister, Drusilla, on account of her extraordinary beauty: but that this charge must have been made without either foundation or reflection on the part of the historian, is very clear from his own recital. The beauty and influence of Berenice had been long known and widely acknowledged. She had neither occasion, nor probably inclination, to envy her sister the gifts she herself possessed. But the very manner in which Josephus writes the charge, shows its fallacy. Drusilla was already married to Aziz, king of Amesa, who had consented to embrace the Jewish religion to obtain her. When Felix was procurator of Judea, he saw Drusilla, and fell madly in love with her. Through the means of a Cypriot Jew, he persuaded her to forsake her husband Aziz, and marry him. "Accordingly, she acted ill; and because she was desirous to avoid her sister Berenice's envy—for she was very ill-treated by her on account of her beauty—was prevailed upon to

* After the death of his brother-in-law, and also uncle, Herod of Chalcis, the kingdom of Chalcis was given to Agrippa.

transgress the laws of her country, and marry Felix." Now it appears to me that Berenice's envy (even granted she had to encounter it) had nothing whatever to do with this decision. The representations of the Cypriot, the seductive persuasions of Felix, and her own inclinations, were the sole incentives; for she certainly was not a whit more protected from her sister's envy as the wife of Felix, than she had been as the wife of Aziz: nay, scarcely as much; for, when united to Felix, she was continually liable to be thrown in Berenice's way, both in Jerusalem and Rome; and this could not have been the case when residing in her first husband's kingdom of Emesa. This charge, then, against Berenice has no foundation in reason; but most probably originated in Josephus's great wish to conciliate the Romans, even while he appeared to be writing an impartial history of his own country. Had he been straightforward, we should have found some condemnation of Drusilla for marrying a heathen, and forsaking, without any just cause, her former husband. But as the heathen was a Roman, he passes over the transgression very lightly; and, instead of blaming Drusilla for conduct which was undoubtedly evil, absolves her at the expense of her sister, who had probably no more to do with it than he had himself. And this is the justice of historians! Surely we should examine well, ere we permit the youthful mind to embrace their views as infallible; and rather encourage them to reflect, and have an opinion of their own, instead of blindly swallowing the food which historians provide.

That Berenice should sometimes be regarded as the sister, and sometimes as the wife of Agrippa, does not at all surprise us, for some historians actually call her his wife.* What foundation they have for this assertion, however, we should be glad to know. Certainly, Josephus must be to them an unknown authority; for he shows her parentage and connexions somewhat too clearly for this idea to originate with him. The mistake of the moderns, and the false scandalous reports of the ancients, may however arise from the same causes. We have already shown the close tie uniting Jewish brothers and sisters of nearly the same age; that Agrippa and Berenice were always associated in the thoughts, and even the will of their father. As Herod's wife, and queen of Chalcis, Berenice

* Jahn's Hebrew Commonwealth.

was more continually in Jerusalem, and learning lessons of government rather from her father than her brother, who was then at Rome. Herod, though king of Chalcis, almost constantly resided in Jerusalem; and during the minority of the young Agrippa, obtained the sovereignty over the Temple, and the privilege of nominating the high priest. Berenice was, therefore, actually queen over the Jews, at that time, as well as of Chalcis; and the former people were accustomed to regard and feel towards her, as with her husband, the representative of royalty.

When Herod died, his kingdom of Chalcis, over which Berenice was still queen, was given to Agrippa, and the brother and sister were, in consequence, again thrown so closely together, that as Agrippa had no wife, they were always alluded to, and spoken of as king and queen. As the daughter, sister, and widow of kings, accustomed, too, to share in the government, and influence the people, she was always spoken of as Queen Berenice, and queen of Chalcis, over which country Agrippa was also king. And mere casual readers are therefore likely to consider her as the *wife* of the king, not knowing how, as his sister, she could have had any right to the title. Acting in concert with Agrippa, as their early education had accustomed them to do, we see her, as in the affair of Florus and Agrippa's address to the people, occupying that position which, not generally devolving on the sisters of royalty, confirms the supposition of a nearer connexion. But the supposition falls to the ground before the simple facts we have brought forward. Berenice was, in fact, a more independent sovereign of Judea, or rather of a remnant of the Jewish people, than her brother; for him the Romans feared, lest by placing regal power in his hands, their own power over Judea would be diminished. Berenice as a woman, and the wife of a king of Chalcis, was to them a mere cypher with regard to the state, however admired as a beautiful woman in Rome; but the interest she really did take in the affairs of the people, we perceive by her conduct during the administration of Florus.

We have read and reflected on the subject deeply; but though we see much which might be perverted into the rumor to which we have alluded, a consideration of facts proves its utter want of solid foundation. Our authorities are, however, open to all readers, and they are at liberty to adopt their own

opinions. We would only entreat them to reflect on the facts here brought forward under their view, as likely to assist them in their decision—to accustom themselves to *reason from analogy*, as well as to exercise understanding, which is too often thought sufficient in itself for the comprehension of history. We are too far removed from the time in which Berenice lived, to pronounce judgment decidedly for or against her; but when not a single instance is brought forward to make manifest impropriety of conduct, and all *that is* clearly related of her proves a religious, national, and feeling character—when her defamers are *Roman* satirists, and *Roman* historians, for whose dislike it was enough that she was a Jewess—when the pages of her own historian are but too often tarnished with crooked views, partial representation, and Roman feelings, why should we not be permitted to judge charitably as well as harshly? to doubt as well as believe? Her character is, indeed, not written with sufficient clearness for us to draw thence a lesson; but our history of the women of Israel would scarcely have been complete had we omitted her, more especially as her history practically illustrates a law of our state, and demonstrates convincingly that even in that period of spiritual and moral darkness, not a statute existed which could contradict the written law of Moses, by a refusal to women of those spiritual privileges, and that solemn responsibility, therein so forcibly inculcated.

CHAPTER XI.

GENERAL HISTORY, AND CONCLUSIONS THENCE ELICITED.

In the fearful epochs of misery and war which followed, we find no further mention of woman individually; but, as an important evidence of the care which the Jewish religion took of females, we find Josephus, in his character of general (which he fulfilled infinitely better than that of historian), laboring with

zeal and earnestness to protect the females from insult or outrage. In lawless nations, in times of such terrible evil, this would not have been thought of; whereas with the Hebrew patriot, surrounded as he was with many heavy cares and imminent dangers, it was the first consideration, and was never lost sight of throughout the whole of his career.

In glancing back over the period, which has detained us much longer than we anticipated, from the return from Babylon to the war, we cannot find a single evidence of the veracity or foundation of the charge of Jewish female degradation, nor in fact the workings of a single statute contradictory to the beautiful spirit of the law of Moses. All we have read, every female character brought forward, marks the superior social elevation and individual intellect of the Hebrew females, to the women of any of the surrounding nations. Nay, we see them occupying positions as *wives* and *sisters*—of kings, higher and far more influential than they ever did, or do, in any Gentile land. Instead of being sunk into mere nonentities, as, were they refused all spiritual privileges and temporal freedom, they must have been, we behold their influence, either for good or bad, as great and far-spreading as female influence ever was in any other either ancient or modern land. We cannot discern a trace of that social or domestic abasement which, had any either divine or human statute existed, *must* have been visible at a time when human nature was sunk to the lowest ebb. It is no longer Bible-times or inspired characters which we are considering. The nation was a holy nation no longer, having departed through her iniquities from the Lord. He had left her children to their own hearts; but, in the midst of evil, still the law and its beautiful ordinances lived and breathed in many noble hearts, and its *atmosphere* was still inhaled by the people though its reviving *sunlight* had departed. Not in such a period could woman have taken her natural position, if any law had once existed to her abasement; but she simply *retained* that which she had always *possessed*, and this at the advent of Christianity.

Nor can we discern the faintest evidence of polygamy at this period. If we glance back to the return from Babylon, we must remark that every king and priest and prince is recorded as possessing but one wife. Simon, John Hyrcanus, Aristobulus I., Alexander Jannæus—both his sons, Aristobulus and Hyrcanus—Alexander, the father of Mariamne, her own two

sons, and the other descendants of Herod, the wives of all of whom are mentioned, confirm both the legality and the custom of but one wife, at the very era when our opponents declare the religion of Jesus was absolutely needed to reform the abuses in the marriage state. "Herod had ten wives," there will be many to exclaim, and bring history forward as their authority. With all due deference to them, we assert, aye, and will prove, that Herod had but *three legal wives*, and that just in the same way as adversaries of Christianity *might*, if they chose, declare that Charles II. had ten or twenty wives, and so believe Christianity permitted polygamy; so with an equal share of justice may the opponents of Judaism bring forward Herod as an evidence of the degradation of the Jewish religion and its sanction of polygamy. The personal character of Herod, as well as his magnificence, indeed much more strongly resembled the character of Henry VIII.: the similarity, in fact, between them on many points being so curious, that it might make an interesting historical parallel, though, in the violence of passion and power of remorse, Herod had the advantage; but we mention Charles II., simply to state, that he might just as well be looked upon as the representative of Christianity as Herod of Judaism.

But now to prove that only three of his wives can be considered as legally wedded. Before he married Mariamne, or even made overtures for her hand, *Herod divorced his first wife Doris*, though she had already given him a son, and he had nothing to allege against her, but his own desire to forward his ambition, by a union with the Asmonæan line. Now if polygamy were the law and the *custom* of the land, why need he have taken the trouble of divorcing Doris? Mariamne would equally have been his legal wife, her children equally his heirs; and though Doris might be the less beloved, the law provided for her, even under such an emergency. But, notwithstanding all this, *he divorced her before he married Mariamne;* and surely this alone would prove, that man had already, in some degree, made the advance contemplated, when the law interfered not with his private habits, and *custom* had already rendered the remission needless, although the laws for the offspring of divorced wives still rendered their births legal, and gave them their share of the inheritance. It is, in fact, from this that Herod in his own person appears to have practised polygamy;

but that only one wife had become the custom of the country is further proved by the historian, who mentions but one other *public union*. Two years after the execution of the Asmonæan princess, during which time he was too much tormented by mental remorse and physical disease, to think of taking another wife, Herod married another Mariamne, the daughter of Simon, an obscure individual, but of princely descent, and she enjoyed that dignity, such as it was, for twenty years, till, supposing her to be an accomplice in the conspiracy of Antipater against himself, he divorced her in the last year of his life and reign. Now of this second Mariamne, Josephus makes particular mention in his Antiquities (book xv. ch. 9, sect. 3), that to enable him to make her his wife, he elevated the rank of her father, thinking if he did not legally wed her, he would be stigmatized with cruelty and tyranny, qualities the *semblance* of which he wished to avoid.

There is no mention of his thus wedding any of his other (so called) wives; and, therefore, that he had them, and that their children were all considered legitimate, is not any proof of polygamy being then a national custom: for even granting Herod had publicly married the whole nine, it would not have weighed a single grain against the fact, that every other king, priest, or prince, mentioned since the return from Babylon, had but one. He was one who, in every single act, set law, especially the Jewish law, at defiance. According to Gibbon, the wise and good emperor Charlemagne had also nine wives, but we do not therefore accuse Christians of favoring that doctrine; then why should we lay Herod's licentiousness, granting he proved it, which history denies rather than confirms, to the score of the holy religion which, though he *professed*, he certainly never *practised?*

In a careful and critical survey of the manners and customs of the Jews, between the return from Babylon and their final dispersion, we find nothing whatever differing from the precepts of the early Christians. The apostles were themselves Jews, who wrote for the Gentiles, and condensed and simplified for them, the sublime morality of the Mosaic code. They do not preach a single precept, they do not proclaim a single truth, they do not give a single rule for social and domestic guidance, which we Hebrews had not known and practised ages before they wrote—and wrote, in fact, from their own experience of

Jewish manners and customs. The reverend collector of the "Old Paths" could have known very little of Jewish history, or wilfully misinterpreted that which he did know, to make the extraordinary assertion that the introduction of monogamy belongs to Christianity alone. With very few exceptions, the actors of the New Testament are all Jews; and the domestic life there recorded of course reflects the Jewish life of those days: and had polygamy then existed, would it not have been one of the most important points for the Apostles of the new creed to exalt the new moral law above the old? But we do not find this;—exactly in accordance (in this instance) with the Old Testament, *the New Testament nowhere ordains monogamy and prohibits polygamy.* Impartial men allow this, and Dr. Channing, who, though no Protestant, must surely be considered a Christian, writes concerning Milton's opinion of polygamy, "Finding no prohibition of polygamy in the New Testament, he believed that not only holy men would be traduced, but Scripture dishonored by pronouncing it morally evil:" and again, "We believe it to be an undisputed fact, that although Christianity was first preached in Asia, which had been from the earliest ages the seat of polygamy, the Apostles never denounced it as a crime, and never required their consorts to put away all wives but one."* Surely this is an important confirmation of our assertion, that we did not require the preaching of the Apostles to teach us that refinement and elevation of the social system which, with the advancement of humanity, time would procure us, and which was in fact obtained at the very era in which we are told it was *first* offered us, by the adoption of a superior moral code.

The text to which Christians appeal as the prohibition of polygamy, is one from which a very different conclusion might be drawn—"Whoso shall put away his wife (except for adultery) and shall marry another, committeth adultery, and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Surely this can only mean, that a man is forbidden unlawfully to put away one wife, and marry another in her stead, not to keep the first, and add another to his household; and the spirit of this precept we have already had in the Mosaic law; but, even granting that it does prohibit polygamy, we, too, have a prohibition of equal,

* Channing's Works (People's Edition), vol. i. page 26.

if not superior force, and written much about the same time by the venerable Rabbi Arni: "I say, that any man who marries a second wife, must *fully have repudiated his first*;"* a precept on which Herod appears to have originally acted, by his divorcing Doris before he married Mariamne. That he took Doris back again after the first Mariamne's death, proves nothing. The Jewish law forbade such an act; but we have seen that he cared nothing for the laws; but that Mariamne was his sole wife while she lived is sufficient for our purpose.

There may, perhaps, be some who think these remarks irrelevant to our subject; but if they aid, as they must do, our assertion, that the Jewish religion is enough for her female votaries, that we need no other to elevate and secure our natural position, we earnestly trust that they will not be dismissed unread. We mean no disrespect to other creeds: we shrink from following the example of some, who endeavor to exalt their own faith by debasing and throwing contempt upon another. We would only prove, that the imperfection (if the non-prohibiting polygamy be such) of our moral code exists equally in the other; and that it is the gradual but sure advancement of the human species, which is the refiner and elevator of domestic and social life—not solely the ordinances of any particular laws. The first idea of polygamy being allowed, supposes a degraded position for women; but we have seen, that even at the period of its practice in Judaism, women were *not* degraded, for the law provided against its abuse: and even then, with very few exceptions, the chosen servants of the Eternal proved, in their own persons, the advance beyond their age in the practice of monogamy.

The captivity in Babylon had been an era in Jewish history. The partial return to Jerusalem, and dispersion over other lands, had occasioned very many changes. Man, even in the midst of apparently increasing evil and darkening morality, had yet, in actual fact, made a stride in advance, and much which had polluted the nation before, in the worshipping and sacrificing to idols, the fearful abuse of the gracious non-interference with Eastern customs and long endeared habits, and other crimes coeval with man's least refined state of existence—all had given

* Yebamoth, fol. 65, col. a. For this and many of the preceding remarks on polygamy and the Christian and Jewish discussions on the point, I am indebted to the kind suggestions and valuable information of Mr. Theodores, of Manchester.

way and been trampled on in the terrible revolution which, through the Babylonish power, had overwhelmed the land. Sins of equal magnitude, and demanding yet more fearful retribution, from the neglect and heedlessness of former chastisement, indeed, desecrated Judea; but, in the very different nature of the evil, the very sins themselves, we see, as it were, the advancement in human powers. The good in human nature will not make advance alone. Good and evil passions mutually sway the heart of man; and, according as the one or other gains the ascendency, so will be the increased good or increased evil in appearance of the world. But having an equally increased power of good, the evil is only *visibly* evil; the under-current is still working, though *invisibly*, far more powerfully and beneficially, than in those periods when the capabilities of good and of evil were less than they are now. The conflicting powers could not produce the same end; but as the Divinity in the good advances, the evil will, in the end, be both visibly and invisibly subdued; and man, through the grace of God, attain that perfection for which he was originally framed.

We see the prophecy of this in the sublime fact, that there is never evil without its being the parent of good. No national revolution ever yet took place without being followed by a rapid stride in human nature, and as strikingly visible as far-spreading good: yet during the continuance of those revolutions, what can we trace or feel, but the supremacy of evil, in the war, famine, misery in a thousand shapes, which devastate mankind? Still good is working, and we know and see it when the darkened torrent has rolled back, and the clear crystal waters, reflecting the blue azure of the eternal heavens, are seen beneath.

Thus good sprang for Israel from the captivity of Babylon, working even in the midst of the crime and sin in which its *visible form* was but too soon swallowed up. The minds of men had advanced; but left to their own hardened hearts to obey or disobey the laws of their God, and so *prove* themselves worthy of the mercies proffered *if* they obeyed, they chose the evil, and so by their increased capabilities for its accomplishment, hurled down the most awful chastisement on their own heads, and on their holy land, sweeping in one fearful vortex the innocent and the guilty, the pious and the blasphemer, the obedient and the disobedient: for in this world no distinction might be made. The King of heaven waited till they appeared before

His throne to pronounce sentence according to their *hearts* yet more than according to their *deeds*.

But humanity itself had not gone back, though all on earth seemed dark and terrible. Good worked even there. The Divine part of our mingled nature was visible in those instances of patriotism, martyrdom, earnestness, and spirituality, which our history records of men and women, old age and youth, even in the blackest tempest of the war, and surrounded as they were with men, who, given up to their own passions and inclinations, so succumbed to the evil as to appear incarnate fiends. And good sprang from this; aye, not only from the evil of the war, but from the untold-of, incalculable, indescribable wretchedness of dispersion and persecution. It brought, nay, it is still bringing Israel once more, in loving faith and unquestioning obedience, to his God, and hastening on that day, when the evil shall be entirely subdued, and the good reign triumphant.

With these reflections we will conclude the Sixth Period of our history, leaving to the Seventh a glance over our dispersion, and its effect on the present condition of our nation, male and female. Brought down, as the history of the women of Israel now is, to nearly seventy years after the advance of Christianity, the proofs of our non-abasement and degradation become yet more important; for there are many to assert, that in the Bible-times the Hebrew females shared the holy privileges of the males, but that it was the falling-off from this spiritual Judaism, the mingling human with Divine authority, which so degraded and blinded the Hebrews after the Babylonish captivity, as absolutely to demand for our salvation the belief in the atonement of Jesus, and adoption of the new creed which his apostles preached.

We trust that we have convincingly proved to our own nation, and from our own history, that this was *not* the case—that no human additions to the pure law had, between the first and second captivity, lowered the position, or interfered with the spiritual privileges of the Women of Israel. The conversion and earnest zeal of Helena of Adiabene would be in itself sufficient to controvert this charge; and we have, in addition, alike the story of the martyr-mother—the independent sovereignty of Alexandra, wife of Alexander Jannæus—the influence of Mariamne, as sole representative of the Asmonæans—and of Salome, in the pursuit of her fiend-like machinations

—of Berenice, in the performance of her singular vow, and her rank and power as the *sister* and *widow* of kings, to convince us still more unanswerably, that the woman of Israel enjoyed a temporal power, and privileges peculiarly her own; and was debarred in not a single instance, of the spiritual privileges and solemn responsibilities which had been bestowed on her by the law of God, and which the manners and customs of her country at the advent of Christianity undeniably confirmed. This, then, is enough for us. There is no trace *before* the dispersion of that mingling of human with Divine ordinances with which we are charged; and therefore we cannot allow, that for *us* the moral preaching of the Christian apostles was needed. If such, indeed, took place *after* the dispersion, it was from the care of holy men to keep pure and holy the jewel of their faith, which was threatened to be buried, alas! beneath the bloody ashes of constant persecution; and how might we accept as saving, purifying, and reforming, the creed of those very men, whose cruel oppression occasioned the very evil from which they bid us turn. No! even in the midst of anarchy, misery, and blood, the religion of God shone forth DIVINE. It was sufficient for us *then;* and oh! doubly dearer, holier, more precious is it to us now!

SEVENTH PERIOD.

CHAPTER I.

THE WAR.—ITS HORRORS.—ORIGIN AND END.—FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY.—REAL CAUSE OF JEWISH CHASTISEMENT.—DISPERSION.—THOUGHTS ON THE TALMUD.

It is with emotions of actual relief and gladness that we leave to other works the details of that awful war, during the continuance of which 1,356,460 of our hapless countrymen perished, and 101,700 graced as prisoners the triumph of the Roman emperor and his son; and this calculation relates only to the period of the destruction of Jerusalem: the thousands and thousands of men, women, and children, who fell victims to after massacres, are not included.

As a History of the Women of Israel, we need not linger on details which our own historian, Josephus, and yet more powerfully, in all the eloquence of modern writing, Milman has brought so vividly before us, save to give one shuddering glance on what must have been the anguish, the tortures, of the female children of the Lord at that awful period. Every social tie—mother, daughter, sister, wife—must every hour have been subject to the agony of such bereavement as we can but faintly image now. We see, by both Isaiah and Ezekiel, that the sins of the women had added to the weight of national iniquity; but still all were not sinful, all were not rebellious. Countless thousands of those that fell were true to their God and His law. The service of the Temple, the daily offerings, were continued in the very midst of the most horrible internal dissensions and outward siege; and not only men armed for battle, but the aged and the feeble, the loveliest and the most unprotected female, the stripling youth and the tender child, sought

the temple-courts to worship, and often by the very altar found their deaths. What, in this dark epoch, would have supported the Hebrew female, and given her strength to witness misery, suffer torture, and then die? what but an assurance of that immortality, wherein the distinction between the righteous and the wicked should be discerned, and all of this world's agony be swallowed up in an eternity of bliss?

In shrinking from the pages of horror which relate the Jewish war, we sometimes forget to bring forward in its deserved light the noble and exalted patriotism from which the awful struggle sprang. In our last period, we have endeavored to give some idea of the enslaving and savage nature of the Roman government over the provinces of Judea. A reference to the historians of the period will make it clearer still. From Herod, falsely called the Great, originated, as we have seen, the Roman subjection of Judea, and the denationalizing of the Jewish people. But all of nationality, all of patriotism, had not merged into the slavish subjection which the persecuting cruelty of the Roman governors seemed determined to enforce. In the very face of crushing tyranny and inward depression, the Hebrew people rose as one man to throw off the yoke of Rome —Rome, the mistress of the world, Empress of a thousand cities, of a hundred provinces, each one larger and more mighty than the unprotected land whose daring sons held forth the banner of rebellion, and dared to strike for freedom! It was not Rome who commenced the struggle. She would have laughed to scorn the very idea that Judea could lead armies to subject her, when her officers and troops already held the land. No—it was the Jews themselves. And who after this shall accuse us of tacit submission, of wanting in courage, patriotism, spirit, all that makes the warrior? Had we succeeded, we too should have been held up as examples of man in his noblest nature, even as the Swiss under Tell, the Scotch under Wallace and Bruce, and the Americans of a later day; for, when compared with the Hebrews' struggles for liberty and soil, how faint and feeble were the efforts of these modern lands! But the exalted *origin* of the Jewish war is lost in its awful close. We could not succeed; for it was the Lord who fought against us through the Roman swords, in just chastisement for national iniquity, and in fulfilment of His prophecy by Moses. Still let not our sons forget that their ancestors alone dared brave the

mighty force of imperial Rome—their ancestors alone so fought for freedom that mightier armies than were needed for the reduction of any other province were summoned against them. Aye, and that, had not the wrath of the Eternal worked against them, in the division of themselves, and in the awful fulfilment of the threatenings which they had disregarded, Judea would have been unconquered still.

One important fact it is necessary to notice here. Our young sisters, no doubt, have often read and heard (for it is impossible to peruse Gentile historians of the time without such impressions), that the awful occurrences of the war, the destruction of our glorious Temple, and banishment from our Holy Land, all were occasioned, not by our departure from the law of God, and manifold national transgressions, but from our obstinate rejection of Jesus, when he came for our salvation. Now, without an intimate knowledge of our history during the continuance of the Second Temple, this might be a startling argument. We see that we are dispersed; we read of all the miseries and massacres which have befallen us; of the omens and prodigies that preceded the destruction of the Temple. We are told by eager Gentile acquaintance, or read in their books, that so Jesus prophesied, and that he wept when he looked on Jerusalem, foreseeing all the calamities about to ensue *because the people rejected him;* and unless we know another cause for all these things, how are we to answer?

And yet how easy is the true reply! A very cursory glance over our history, from the return from the Babylonish Captivity, even if we go no further than the death of Herod, will bring glaringly before us the awful sins for which we are thus punished. Even in the brief sketch which we have given at the commencement of our Sixth Period, we surely must trace the national departure from the pure law of Moses, the assimilation with other nations, the entire forgetfulness that we were to be a "nation of priests, holy unto the Lord"—the awful deeds of parricide and massacre devastating the houses of those very princes chosen as the Lord's anointed priests: and even had we but the reign of Herod, we read a sufficiency of sin to hurl down on us the threatened chastisement of the Eternal. The period between the first and second Captivity was granted us as a period of trial, whether or not we would return with our whole hearts unto the Lord. The twenty-eighth chapter of Deu-

tercessary, with its sublime and startling prophecy, was ours *then* ever as it is now. We had already felt the wrath of the Lord: and the power to return to Him and to His law, or to reject them, His mercy had planted in our hearts. If man had no power of himself to keep the law of God, as the Gentiles teach, then, indeed, would the law have been instituted in mockery, not in love, to destroy not to save; and there could have been no need for the sublime prophecy of Moses. This is not the work to dilate on the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, as inclination might prompt. We can only beseech our readers to turn to it themselves—to observe the blessings promised for obedience—the curses threatened on the disobedient—to compare the history of Israel during the continuance of the Temple, with the first fourteen verses of the chapter, and reflect if such blessings could be ours; and then from the fifteenth to the end of the chapter: and do we need more to instruct us in the nature of our sins—and the wherefore they were punished!

"But it shall come to pass, if *thou wilt not* hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes, which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee." This single verse is all-sufficient to overturn every Gentile argument. The prophecy which it precedes is so exact a description of all that took place in Jerusalem, *before* its siege by the Romans, *during* the siege, and *afterwards*, in the various lands where we were scattered, that it would seem as if it must have been written by an eye-witness, or *after* those events took place—not by an historian, living hundreds and thousands of years before. This single chapter is sufficient to prove the truth of the Bible, Judaism, and God. The description of the siege may in a slight degree be applicable either to the first or second destruction of the Temple; but, as a whole, it refers *only* and *solely* to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and the final dispersion of the Jews.

Let not, then, the impressions derived from Gentile historians, so confine the youthful Hebrew mind, as to conceal for a single instant the real reason for our past miseries and present dispersion. We *were*, we *are*, chastised, not for rejecting Jesus, but for long, long years of disobedience to our law. We are chastised for those national and individual crimes and sins, recorded

in our history during the continuance of our Second Temple—not for refusing belief in Jesus. If omens and prodigies did precede the destruction of the Temple, might not Nature have been equally moved with horror for the fate threatening the Jewish people for their *manifold sins*, as for a single one? Jesus wept when he thought on the calamities of Jerusalem; but this only proves, that, like every other *Jew*, he was well acquainted with the prophecy of Moses, and, in the supremacy of national sin, beheld its near fulfilment—wholly and entirely distinct from their treatment of himself.

Surely, then, the Gentile arguments, as to the cause of our dispersion, must fall harmless to the ground, a knowledge of our own history being all that is required to supply us with defence.*

The war itself lasted but five years; but the miseries and massacres of the Jews commenced almost from the death of Herod, and continued, with little cessation, long after Jerusalem was destroyed. In every Roman province where they took refuge, they were almost universally massacred, either from some fancied insult, or revolt among themselves, or from the determination of the Romans to sweep them from the earth. The Greeks joined in this universal persecution—their only point of cordial union with the Romans seeming, in fact, to be their detestation of and cruelty towards the exiles of the Lord. The reign of Adrian threatened them with almost as complete an extermination as their expulsion from their land. Yet still they lived on, endowed, it seemed, with an undying vitality, which neither cruelty, nor suffering, nor death in its most awful shape, could extinguish. Nor was it the *race* only, which was preserved, but

* Our opponents will, no doubt, urge, that it was to redeem us from those very sins, dilated on above, that Jesus came; and had we accepted him, our punishment, in the destruction of our beautiful city, and banishment from our Holy Land, would have been averted. This sounds well: but as no such condition whatever was annexed, as a saving clause, to the prophetic threatenings of Moses, in chapter twenty-eight of Deuteronomy, we can neither accept nor allow it. Had the Eternal ordained and required this acceptance of Jesus, He would have inspired Moses to insert, at the end of verse fifteen, chapter twenty-eight, "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken, &c.—*nor accept the salvation that I offer through the atonement* of the Saviour whom I will send." But as there are *no* such conditions, the cause of all that has befallen us originates in the awful disobedience to the "voice of the Lord our God," and disobedience to the law which He gave through Moses.

the *religion*. Wherever they were, in whatever circumstances, either of prosperity or adversity, oppression or partial freedom, still they were Jews—more earnest, more hearty, more resolute followers of their law, than they had been when outward circumstances might have permitted its strictest observances.

It was not until the reign of Antoninus Pius, that the miseries of the Hebrews subsided into a partial calm, and privileges were granted them throughout Italy and the various provinces of Rome, which enabled the patriarch of Tiberias to obtain such freedom and power in the observance of his religion, as to be recognised by the whole Jewish nation, wherever scattered, as their supreme head and spiritual sovereign.

It was under his mild jurisdiction, that the Rabbins or learned men crept from their hiding-places, and resumed the study of the law. From them, at various times, emanated many of the minor ordinances and learned explanations of the written word, which were afterwards collected and compiled under the different names of Gemara, Mishna, and, later, the Talmud. The synagogues may also be said to have arisen from this period. Wherever there were ten Jews, there was a synagogue, with its books of the written law, and teachers; and its galleries for the accommodation of the Hebrew females, that they too might partake the spiritual instruction and privileges offered to their brethren.

Over all the provinces of the great Empire, the Hebrew race extended; and from them penetrated all over Europe, and into the far-off countries of China, Malabar, other parts of the East Indies, the coast of Africa, and places equally remote, where their very origin is plunged in mystery. In China, their synagogue we are told much more resembles the ancient Temple, than any of those in Europe. In Malabar, there are both black and white Jews, the former most probably either the descendants of black slaves or converts. In Bokhara and Persia, particularly in the cities of Ispahan and Shiraz, Rashan and Yezd—in Mesopotamia, Assyria, Damascus, Arabia, Egypt, Cairo, the borders of Abyssinia, Morocco;—in all these places the Hebrews found resting; precarious and uncertain indeed, but there they still continue to exist. In all the different kingdoms of Europe (except Norway, in which country we never remember seeing them mentioned), they have lived, flourished, been persecuted and expelled, recalled and protected. In Spain alone,

the edict of expulsion never appears to have been recalled; but, as if in direct manifestation of the protecting arm of that gracious Providence, who had ordained the eternal existence of His people, the very year of their banishment from Spain, Christopher Columbus discovered that new continent, which was to be to them a home of more perfect freedom and peace than they had enjoyed since their dispersion. In America, persecution never assailed—expulsion never banished. In Spain, they had acquired a greater degree of learning, influence, and power, than in any other European nation; and such they might equally obtain in that land, which appeared to be called from the deep, at the voice of the Creator, to provide them a home where neither oppression nor even civil disabilities can check the same advance of mind and species, to which in Spain, and in Spain alone, they had attained. Surely, this consideration ought to weigh deeply in the minds of our brethren across the Atlantic, and, inciting them to rise superior to the worldly dreams and time-seeking pursuits of the age, urge them to make manifest to the world what freedom and equality will make the Jew.

It would be an interesting and curious study, to endeavor to trace the first colonies of the Hebrews in all these varied lands; though, from the utter absence of all authentic documents, we fear the task, however interesting, would be impossible. We seem only to know, that in every quarter of the globe God has placed witnesses in simple fulfilment of His unalterable word. In the North and in the South, in the East and in the West, there we are, and there we shall be, until that glorious day, when the same mighty word which sent us forth will recall us to the land of our fathers—when, for our path, the mountains shall be laid low and the valleys exalted, and the tongue of the Red Sea shall be dried up, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and in Jerusalem the glorious Temple be upraised from the dust, as the visioned eye of Ezekiel saw and prophesied, in the sublime description contained in the last eight chapters of his book.

We cannot doubt that these things WILL BE, when we behold, by our residence in every land, what HAS BEEN and WHAT IS, and remember, that the same word which prophesied the PAST, whose fulfilment we have seen, hath prophesied the FUTURE, whose fulfilment we must equally behold, and *believe* even while it be deferred.

The history of the Jews, as a body, however, enters not into the plan of the present work; nor shall we even dwell upon it as long as we did in our previous Period. From the siege of Jerusalem, our history is very much more generally known, than during the period between the return from Babylon and the final dispersion. We still trace the effects of the one in our present condition, and in the frequent mention of us in modern history, the other is but too often entirely forgotten, or only thought upon as blended with the records of Syria, Greece, Rome, and the final siege.

Our task rests with the Women of Israel; and of them we have unhappily so little mention, either as individuals or as a body, in modern times, that we can add but little to our previous pages. Yet that little, trifling as it may seem, on a superficial consideration, is of real importance to the confirmation of our asserted point, the perfect freedom and equality of the Hebrew female.

We shall not find her wanting in any single point which constitutes the fit recipient and promulgator of a persecuted creed, or shrinking, as her physical weakness might portend, from any suffering, even that most agonizing—the bereavement of her children, by her own or their father's hand, could they thus only be saved from the denial of her God. Could any woman have done this, have looked on the pitiless murderers of all she loved, and then by cruel tortures calmly shared their fate; had she been deprived, as our opponents in their ignorance declare, of the belief in, and hope of, the bliss and rest of immortality?

Before, however, we bring forward instances of female martyrdom, there is one subject which, though we approach it with reluctance, from the opposition and wilful misconception which it is likely to produce, we desire to bring most strongly before our readers. It is the supposition of many amongst the Gentiles, and we fear amongst some few of ourselves, that it is the Talmud which, promoting the spirit of the Mosaic law, authorizes, nay commands, the degradation and enslaving of the Jewish female. In confirmation of this theory, there are many zealous conversionists who bring forward, as translations from the Talmud, detached verses and portions, which appear so strongly to support their assertion, as to prevent all reply. Now it should be well remembered, both by ourselves and our oppo-

nents, that much which is called the Talmud, and supposed to be coeval with its original venerable compilers, are the speculations, inquiries, and even ordinances of much later writers, whose opinions were no doubt often biassed (though unconsciously) by the habits and customs of their own darkened age. Let us first consider the origin and real intent of these most venerable and often falsely abused forms. Divine they are not. There are, we think, comparatively but few now, who will place them, in point of divinity and dignity, with the written oracles of God; for if they are, why do we not see the same honor and reverence paid to them, as to the sacred rolls, whose dwelling is the House of God, and whose appearance and elevation in the sight of the assembled multitude, cause the congregation simultaneously to rise, in silent homage to their inspired author?

When expelled from their own land—banished into every quarter of the globe—the temple service and worship, exactly as Moses had ordained, was impossible.* The sacrifices were compelled to cease; for the fire from heaven consumed them no longer as in the First Temple; nor, as in the Second, were there courts and altars for the sacrifices; nor flocks and herds in possession of the Israelites to offer up. The multitudes, more eager than ever, from their state of adversity and trial, to return to the Lord their God, and once more obey that holy law, which, when it was in their power to obey, they had totally disregarded, beheld the opportunity so to do gone from them. Morning and evening, sabbaths and holidays, they had been accustomed to offer sacrifice and prayer. In case of singular vows, of thanksgiving, or penance, in every circumstance of life, they had a high priest to whom to resort, a Temple where to come, offerings ordained by Moses, and laws and statutes entering into every man's household, and guiding not only his spiritual and social but his domestic life. But these laws and ordinances were for Israel when an independent state, subjects of God alone, and in possession of lands and their produce—flocks, herds—all of which were absolutely necessary for exact obedience to the law. In their banishment, how could they be guided in exact accordance with the pure law of Moses? At

* For these remarks on the Talmud, and supposition of its use and intent, the author alone is answerable.

first perusal, they must have been almost appalled at the many ordinances which they could not observe; yet, on a second study of the holy books of Moses, and comparing them with the prophets, they must have seen, that obedience, as far as lay in their power, in their several lands of exile, was imperatively demanded from them; that their only hope of restoration and salvation was in a faithful adherence to the God and law of their fathers, and a firm faith in His promised mercy, to strengthen and purify man's feeble efforts, and render them acceptable to him.

But how were they to obey? Eager and earnest in their repentance and desire to return to their God, now that the long-threatened chastisement had fallen, they welcomed with rejoicing the efforts of holy and good men to lay down a path of obedience which, even in their exile and in the midst of persecution, they might tread. Hence arose those ordinances which are accused of clogging with dead and soulless weight the pure and spiritual Law of God; but which, in those fearful eras of exile and persecution, bound Jew to Jew, and with God's protecting blessing, saved His religion from amalgamation with other nations, and all adoption of the Gentile creeds. But the holy men who originally raised the protecting casket around the beautiful jewel of their faith, never either preached or intended that their ordinances were to be considered divine or perpetual. It was to *preserve* the purity, the spiritual purity, of their Law unsullied, when circumstances must otherwise have crushed it (we are writing humanly, not alluding to the Divine Guardian, who would always have preserved us from annihilation), *not* to take its place and be considered in the same unalterable and changeless light with which we look on the law of God. Circumstances might demand the modification, even the alteration, of some of these Rabbinical statutes; and could their wise and pious originators have been consulted on the subject, they would have unhesitatingly adopted those measures most likely to advance and aid spiritual improvement, even if to do so demanded a modification of some of their previously instituted statutes. We have but to glance over the life and writings of the great Maimonides to prove this assertion.

To the speculative theorists, students, and additional compilers of the middle ages, be it remembered, we do not allude. The great mischief which has befallen our people, in the

supposed superiority of form over spirit—the ordinances of the Talmud over those given by Moses, and explained by the prophets—originates not in the first venerable compilers of the Talmud at the time of our dispersion, but in the writers of the middle ages, whose minds were darkened by the bloody ashes of persecution, who beheld all of spirituality apparently about to succumb before the awful darkness and abasement in which misery had plunged the mass; and who, in consequence, multiplied forms to guard them still more strictly from assimilation with their persecutors. And all those laws in which the fierce exclusiveness, so contrary to the spirit of love pervading the law of God, is founded, owe their origin to the same source. Opponents would do well to remember this, and, when they point to vows and laws which *appear* to contradict the law of God, apply them to their only source, not the disobedience of the Jew, but the persecution of the Gentile, and the dark misery thence ensuing.

But in our first dispersion, eagerly and rejoicingly the people listened to and observed the mild protecting ordinances of their spiritual teachers. In their banishment and misery, they beheld the awful fulfilment of the Eternal's word; and remembering the beneficent mercy and forbearance which they had scorned, turned in deep repentance once more to their God. Their conscience, their earnest longings, to prove repentance by obedience, found rest and peace in the steady observance of ordinances which in their captive state they could obey, and which brought down the spiritual religion of their own bright land to the homes and synagogues of their captivity. These ordinances, and the spiritual supremacy of the Rabbins, became even the more necessary, as the Christian and then the Mahomedan religions spread. It was comparatively easy to separate themselves from the idolatrous abominations of the Heathen; but when they were thrown sometimes amongst the followers of the Nazarene, acknowledging the same God and the same moral law—at others, with the followers of Mahomed, proclaiming the unity of God, observing the same covenant of Abraham, having some belief in Moses, and refusing the same interdicted food—the necessity of increased exclusiveness and care of the great mass of the people, who were in much too degraded and enslaved a position to realize the superior spirituality and truth of their own religion, became more and more evident, and gave

our wise men still greater power and authority than they had originally sought. The multitudes scattered in every land, and liable to every insult and persecution, had neither the opportunity nor the mind to study for themselves, and were glad to follow unquestioningly in the path laid down.

If we impartially consider our position in the long centuries of persecution, we surely cannot wonder even if inward spirituality did in some degree give place to outward form. To realize the former as our God demands, requires a position of comparative freedom—a breathing space, as it were—to cultivate all those refining and elevating emotions which enlarge and spiritualize the soul. In many countries the Hebrew was sunk to a lower and more degraded position, than even (we will not say the slaves) the very beasts of the soil. If, in those eras, they had not had some ordinances which they could obey, without even caring to know the wherefore, how could their religion have been preserved? We allude merely to those brief calms in their lives, when the sword of slaughter, though hovering over them, was still sheathed. At those times the mass might have appeared only to possess and value the casket, not the jewel; but where the hovering sword fell, and multitudes were doomed to the dread alternative of death, or denial of their God, then did the immortal glory of the jewel flash through the encircling casket, and endow them with the pure spirit of hope and faith which gave them strength to die! Mere blind adherence to instituted forms could never have done this. The spirit of their holy religion was breathed into every breast, invisible and unfelt in the sluggish depths of daily misery and constant fear, but bursting into life at the first call, and endowing with that firm belief in immortality which alone creates the martyr.

Those periods, then, in our history, in which the spirit of the Mosaic law seems lost in multiplied and weighty forms, cannot be charged to the ordinances of our ancient fathers, but to the still sluggish indifference which ever follows extreme excitement. Accustomed through so many centuries to anticipate and endure only persecution and slavery, it required a very long interval for the Israelites even to *realize* the belief that there were actually some countries in which they might live in perfect freedom and equality with their Gentile neighbors, and, consequently, that something more was demanded from them than mere adherence

to instituted forms because so did their fathers. No longer called upon to *suffer*, the spirit within them so slept, that they became at length almost unconscious of its existence; and if asked the wherefore they observed such forms, and what was the origin of their belief, they might have found it difficult to reply. From this unnatural stagnation many Christians formed the opinion that the religion of the Jew was a mere spiritless formula, unenlightened by a single ray of immortal hope or spiritual faith, forgetting that the very evil they condemn, originated in the persecution of their own ancestors, *not* in the religion of the Jews.

The period of this stagnation is now, however, almost extinct It had but its appointed time; and though in some lands it still too oppressively exists, yet wherever the Hebrew is FREE a new spirit is awakening, giving precious promise of that time when spirit and form shall be re-united, as the God of Love ordained, the one aiding the other, till that perfection is attained, which, with the purifying blessing of the Lord, will lead us to our own dear land, and permit us once more to be His own.

CHAPTER II.

ORDINANCES AND TALES OF THE TALMUD, RELATING TO THE WOMEN OF ISRAEL.

HAVING thus briefly glanced over the real origin, intent, and meaning of the Talmudic Ordinances, we will return to the point whence we started, and ascertain whether or not our venerable sages so completely contradicted the spirit of the law of Moses, as to hint, countenance, or ordain the degradation of the Hebrew female. For this purpose, we will transcribe a few of the rabbinical maxims, with which we have been favored by the kindness of the friend already referred to, whose sound knowledge of the Hebrew, both Biblical and Talmudical, and deep research, render his information on the subject indeed invaluable. The Hebrew

Review, and one or two other casual notices in divine history, have also enabled us to form an opinion: but the Talmud itself should be its foundation; and from that we, as a female, are unhappily debarred.

We must refer once more, though unwillingly, to the Nazarene assertion, that their religion was the first, and is the only one, which provides for women. "*For woman never would, and never could have risen to her present station in the social system, had it not been for the dignity with which Christianity invested those qualities peculiarly her own,*" etc.* We can quite understand and sympathize in the Christian woman's love for her own faith, and heartfelt eloquence in the privileges it assures her. We can quite understand—when she compares her lot with that of the Heathen and Mahomedan, and remembers, that had it not been for the wider spread of Christianity, her fate would still have been the same—the glow of mind and heart, which must infuse her whole being, and naturally be reflected in her writings; but then, in her eloquent appeal to young countrywomen to remember what they owe to Christianity, let her not be so unjust as to count the Jewish religion amongst those in which woman, in her clinging and truly feminine character, is uncared for and unvalued. The moral laws to which she owes her privileges, came from US, and US alone. Who were the apostles and preachers? Who went about, giving the Heathen a knowledge of Israel's God, though they disregarded the ceremonial law? Who but HEBREWS,

* Woman's Mission, page 140. We should not lay so much stress upon this point, were such observations as those quoted above confined to *conversation*. But when we see such sentiments as are contained in pages 140, 141, and 142, of a work, which, from its deserved popularity, is disseminated, not only over our England, but, no doubt, over many other countries, how can we pass such charges by? Did the authoress not allude to the Jews, we should not feel the necessity of noticing it so imperative, but when even the religion of the people of God is included in such false and sweeping assertions (see page 142), we should be failing in either respect or love for our own holy faith, did we not endeavor to remove the impression. Many of our young sisters are acquainted with the really excellent little work in question, and unless well guarded, by finding all that the authoress urges in support of Christianity in their *own* holy faith, are likely to be startled and annoyed by what appears so plausible; the more so from the justice and moderation and truth of the previous chapters. In writing for our own sex, we are not authorized in refusing to notice such mistaken charges.

whose whole minds and hearts were imbued, *not* with new doctrines, but with the Hebrew moral law, which they disseminated in their wanderings, in such simple language as was best fitted for the long-darkened understandings of the Heathen whom they addressed? Jesus himself was a Jew, and every word which he preached or said in regard to morality, even his parables themselves, have their foundation in the commentaries of the Jewish elders on the written law. We cannot trace a single moral statute throughout the New Testament, which is new, or even simplified to us. What may seem obscure, from the pure spirituality of the words of Moses, our venerable sages explain in language so simple and expressive, that the most obtuse could not fail to understand. While, then, we willingly acknowledge that every *Gentile* nation, under the mild, equitable influence of Christianity, has every reason to love and venerate the religion it upholds, and that every Christian woman would be wanting alike in honesty and enthusiasm, did she not consider her lot as blessed above that of every other Gentile land, let her not throw a slur upon the females of that holy faith, from whose privileges *her own have sprung*, and for whose safety, protection, guidance, and elevation for the obtaining and encouraging all the loveliest and most *feminine* attributes of her sex, the Most High himself deigned to lay down laws, disregard to which was disobedience to himself.

This argument we have already treated at length in our Second Period, where we brought forward every statute relative to the Hebrew female, which our great lawgiver wrote down. In the succeeding Periods, even after we left the records of the Bible for the later history of Josephus, we have shown, and we believe somewhat satisfactorily, how those laws were followed by the influence and treatment of the females of Judea, even when the pure law was almost lost in the national anarchy reigning, with little intermission, during the continuation of the Second Temple.

Surely this ought to be sufficient, even for those who declare that modern Judaism is distinct from, and even opposed to, the Judaism of the Bible, and that the Talmud is the cause. We do not think that the New Testament itself can bring forward a more touching and beautiful ordinance than the following:—"Make allowance for the weakness of thy wife; and if thou canst not raise her to thee, do thou stoop, and speak encourag-

ingly to her"—or. "If thy wife be of small stature, stoop, and speak gently to her." Again, "Ever be zealous for the honor of thy wife: for there is no blessing found in a man's house, which comes not through his wife."

To love their wives was natural; therefore love is not so much insisted upon as honor and respect. "Hold your wives in *high respect*, and you will be *rich indeed*;" but how could a man respect his wife, if her domestic and social position were degraded and enslaved! Again, "A man should *honor* his wife *more* than himself, and *love* her as he does *his own* person." Here love is valued less than honor, because we may *love* an *inferior* being. We can only *respect* and *honor* superior virtue and elevated qualities; and this statute could never have proceeded from men accustomed to look on their wives in the light of inferiors, or in any single point but on an equality with themselves.

"Whoever marries a woman *for money* alone, will not have children according to his wishes," because the ancient fathers looked on "Woman's mission" to be principally the education of her family, an idea borne out by the whole history of the Jews, in the particular mention of the mothers of kings, and other exalted persons. "A man should beware of marrying the daughter of an uneducated man; for should he die, or be banished, his children must remain uneducated, their mother being unacquainted with the glory of education." An equal care is taken for the comfort and respect due to an educated wife. "A man should give his daughter to an educated man, for no disgrace or strife enters the house of a man of education." Now were the Hebrew wife a mere cypher in the household, what could it signify on whom she was bestowed? Exactly in accordance with the spirit of the Mosaic Law, the duties prescribed by the Talmud towards mothers are of equal weight and force as towards the fathers; even more, for if a son see his mother and father either imprisoned or in danger, he is bound to save his *mother* even before his father—a natural and an affecting ordinance; for the latter is supposed, from greater physical strength and mental energy, to be more easily enabled to save himself, while the weakness and delicacy of the mother rendered her entirely dependent on her son. The law of God commanded the same honor to be paid the mother as the father (see Second Period—laws for mothers), and the venerable com-

pilers of the Talmud departed not one item from its spirit; thus upholding the moral and social dignity of women, even had there been no other law. That the *mother*, as well as the children, were to honor the father of a family, surely cannot be twisted into a degrading ordinance. Unhappy, indeed, is the woman of any creed, rank, or country, who cannot, with her whole heart, mind, and soul, honor the father of her children —the husband of her choice!

The laws for the widows and the fatherless also, on which we laid so much stress, as marking the care for woman by the Mosaic law, in our Second Period, we find commented upon by our ancient fathers, so exactly in the pure spirit of the Divine ordinance, that we cannot resist transcribing the whole passage.

"Be very careful in the treatment of widows and orphans, not merely if they be poor; but because *their spirits be broken*, though they be ever so rich. Even the widow of a king, and his orphans, demand that carefulness. For it is said, 'All widows and orphans shall ye not oppress.' Let the manner of addressing them be kind; do not burden them with labor, or oppress them with harsh words. Let their property be more precious to thee than thine own; for he that offends or oppresses them, and injures their property, is an evil-doer, and his punishment is expressed in the law: 'And my anger shall break out against you,' &c. (Exodus xxii. 24.) The Holy One, blessed be He, has vouchsafed to grant them a particular covenant, that when they invoke Him against their oppressors, they shall be heard, as it is said, 'When they call up to me I will hear them, for I am merciful.'" (Ex. xx. 23.)

The prohibition to offend them is, however, only in cases where it may cause them injury: but when it is for their good; as for instance, where a teacher is to instruct them in the law, or in his trade, it is a duty to reprove them; nevertheless, a distinction ought to be made in their favor, and they should be treated with greater forbearance than other pupils, so as to instruct them mildly, with great patience and attention; for it is said, the Lord will defend their cause," &c. (Psalm cxl. 12.) Whether the child have lost father or mother, it is alike called an orphan, until it attains an age to protect itself.* And this

* Extracted from the Hebrew Review, pp. 60 and 61. Thence taken from Morality of the Talmud. Hilchoth Deoth (Ethic Precepts), Div. vi. sect. 10.

at once proves that the Hebrew mother was even on a more acknowledged equality with the father than in any other nation; for we believe that orphans in general mean those who have lost *both parents*, or a *father* only.

We think, if we look the world over, and examine every religious or moral code, we shall fail to find any laws to surpass these; not only in humanity, but in most exquisite tenderness to that bruised and broken reed, a widow of any rank or class, from the relict of a sovereign to the relict of a slave (so called), guiding not alone *conduct* towards her, but actually words and the *manner* of address.

Again, we find peculiar regard paid by the Talmudists to the laws instituted by Moses for females of every denomination, as is proved by such laws as the following: "The woman *takes precedence* of the male in being fed, clad, and freed from captivity." Repeatedly recommending us to afford protection and relief to the *female first*, and then to the male, in strong figures, which are so common to Eastern idiom, it commands, "Let thy table be considerably *within* thy means; thy dress and appearance *according* to thy means; but the comforts of thy *wife* and children *beyond* thy means."

We have already noticed the humane statutes in our law, for the protection and comfort of the maid servants, or female slaves in Israel (see Second Period); and that it was illegal for a man to transfer his Hebrew maid servant to another master. In exact accordance with the spirit of this beautiful ordinance, Tradition (or the Talmud) tells us: "The male servant became free on his master's death, *provided* there was no male heir; but for the *female* servant's release, there was no such condition." Her master's dying hour was the moment of her manumission, expressed in the Talmudic simple brevity by the words; "The Hebrew maid servant serves neither son nor daughter."

Here, then, even in these few and trifling extracts, we find, that instead of contradicting, every statute given by Moses relative to mothers, wives, daughters, widows, and maid servants in Israel, is *confirmed* by the Talmudic precepts, and so simplified, that it is impossible even for wilful misconception to mistake their meaning. There may be many turns and points in the writings of our ancient sages seeming to contradict them, more especially in the light in which our opponents, to serve their own pur-

poses, bring them forward: but with such laws as we have quoted, all else is of little moment. We *know* that they must have been written by men well versed, not only in the ordinances but in the *spirit* of the law written by Moses, simply because of their exact accordance; that at the time such precepts were collected and written, the social or domestic position of woman *could not* have been the degraded and frivolous one assigned in general to the females of the East. That the Talmud *must* have regarded them as companions and friends to their husbands—educators of their children—mistresses of their household; and possessing, from their physical weakness and delicacy, such claims on the protection, tenderness, and kindness, not of their relatives alone, but of their *nation* in general, which are not to be found in the moral code of any other people.

What later Jewish writers, therefore, may urge upon the subject, if it contradict this spirit, by assigning either position, duties, or employments, derogatory to her as a female, a recipient and promulgator of the law of God, or debarring her from those religious and social principles which were granted her from the delivery of the law, and proved her own by the history of every Jewish female mentioned in the Bible—those laws, statutes, ordinances, precepts, or even allusions, can be now *nothing worth whatever*, for not only (if there be such) do they contradict the law, but the traditions; not only disregard Moses, but the venerable fathers; and, therefore, need neither notice nor denial. However wise and learned may be their writers; however gravely they may be weighed and given, if in one single instance they contradict the law of God and the traditions of the fathers quoted above, we reject them altogether as neither guiding nor binding laws. Speculative theories they may be, probably originating from an intimate association with the Moors of Spain and other nations of Eastern origin and Moslem faith, or even the Nazarenes themselves; for, in the middle ages, under the darkened sway of Catholicism, we certainly can trace very little of the humanizing and elevating effect of Christianity on her female votaries, to which the authoress of "Woman's Mission" so eloquently reverts. But speculative theories have nothing to do with a guiding law. The middle ages teemed with suggestive and inquiring spirits among the Jews. The Bible became almost a sealed

book, from the extreme danger attendant on public perusal and public explanation. Debarred alike from social intercourse or means of gratifying individual ambition, the study of the Talmud was their only resource; the hyperbolic and orient figures, which were mingled with beautiful parables and simple precepts, became to the uninitiated significant of meanings never contemplated by the writers themselves. On these they raised their own theories and speculations—some reasonable, some fanciful, but none gifted with authority to contradict, or take the place of previous laws. They swelled the multitude of volumes already known as the Talmud; and, therefore, when one word or precept is discovered which can be twisted into Jewish contempt of woman, not only the whole work, but the religion itself is contemned; such contemners entirely forgetting that the mighty work they quote, is the reflection not of one but of *very many* differing minds, and that the opinions are either merely individual or national, according as they contradict or uphold, not only the ordinances, but the *spirit* of the law of Moses.

Thus, then, even granting the existence of some portions in our Talmud *apparently* derogatory to women, they are of no importance, and never guided our social system: but often those very portions, on which our opponents argue most eloquently, have nothing to do with the contempt towards females with which they are charged. We will bring forward one instance to explain our meaning.

Amongst the Hebrews, no capital punishment could be inflicted on the testimony of a woman; now this is, of course, twisted by mistaken men into an idea that it proceeded from a contemptuous notion of woman's judgment, an utter mistrust of her veracity, and a supposition that she was not even considered of sufficient consequence to take an oath, or otherwise share in solemn public proceedings.

A brief glance back on the respect paid to Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah, must at once overthrow this idea. It would certainly be an inconsistency not at all according to the stern simplicity of the Jewish character, to allow the mothers and wives in Israel "the high prerogative of speaking in the name of the Eternal, obey their behests, and yet to refuse them the common justice of being believed." But eager zeal to promote the all-important object of our conversion, does not venture quite so

deeply. Happily we can reply by facts as strongly as by suggestions: "It was the awful duty of the witness to bear out the truth of his deposition by the *execution of the verdict;* and it was this part of the functions of a witness which the law nobly declared the female citizen to be unable to perform. Instead of being a stigma upon the character of the nation generally, and of their female population especially, it must, on the contrary, inspire us with admiration of the delicacy of feeling displayed in that enactment."* And when we compare this delicacy with the manners and customs of contemporary nations, the superior elevation and advancement of the people of God must strike us very forcibly. The Hebrew female was debarred by a most just and humane ordinance, from even *witnessing* the shedding of human blood. Surely this is a forcible proof of the care taken in the Talmud to preserve her *feminine* nature in all its original gentleness and purity; even if the restriction should be thought a harsh one by those females who, in civilized countries, may still be found accompanying the criminal to the place of execution, not to bear witness against him, but simply to satisfy their own will and pleasure by the sight of death. In those horrible combats between the hapless gladiators and the wild beasts, in polished, though heathen Rome, women thronged the amphitheatre. In later days, when Catholicism usurped the place of Heathenism, bull-fights arose, in which not only was an innocent animal tortured, but many human beings exposed to death, and yet the beauties of Spain would have felt it a hard restriction had they been prohibited from witnessing the sports. The tournaments themselves, if we examine them, we must confess to be scarcely fit scenes for women; though we ourselves feel that, in their *age*, they must have been fraught with an excitement and a chivalry, from which, in the position the higher females then occupied, it might have seemed hard for them to be debarred. But in Judea, in the Hebrew commonwealth at least, we never find mention of such things. War, with its concomitants, was to them a necessity, not a pastime. The introduction of the Greek and Roman games was a source of the deepest national affliction, as a departure from the holy purity and refined sim-

* Hebrew Review, vol. iii. p. 22, from an article entitled, "On the Administration of Justice among the Hebrews."

plicity inseparable from a strict adherence to the laws of Moses.

It is impossible to compare the social system of the Jews even with the refined notions of other nations of our own day, and yet not to perceive its superiority at once. Even plays were unknown. Actors, ballet-dancers, buffoons, were meaningless terms. The holy people would surely have thought themselves degraded by the very admission of such characters. Yet the arts and sciences were cultivated by them to a pitch of learning, glory, and perfection, unsurpassed, if even equalled, by either Greece or Rome. Music and poetry were to them the atmosphere they breathed; architecture, engraving, embroidery, cunning work in every metal and in every precious stone, rose to a height in their One Temple, and in their palaces, and even houses, which modern times vainly strive to outvie. Painting and sculpture, as the arts we now esteem them, were not so much known, from the care taken to prevent the smallest assimilation to the idolatrous worship of the neighboring nations, by either in paint, wood, or stone, making the likeness of any thing that is in the heaven above, or the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth, although the cherubim which adorned the Ark, and the brazen bulls of the Temple, proved that even sculpture must have been an art well known. Dancing, usually common to barbarous nations, we have seen, was not *such* to us, but usually made the constant accompaniment of national and holy rejoicings, and therefore not regarded in Israel merely as a frivolous pastime; but, as the natural recreation of the young and happy, considered an acceptable and pleasing offering of loving hearts to their holy and gracious King.

In a nation, then, so peculiarly and especially spiritualized and refined, if there should be some social laws respecting their female population which appear to give them less freedom than the females of other nations, it was simply to render them more and more worthy of sustaining that two-fold most holy character —*mothers* of *Israel* and *daughters of the Lord*. We can find nothing either in the Law or its commentaries, by our *really* ancient fathers, to permit the supposition that either in the religious, moral, social, or domestic system, we were to be regarded as of less importance, less responsibility, and of less value in the sight of our God, and of the state, than our brother Man. We were—we are—equals in every spiritual privilege,

and every social and domestic law. Man could neither degrade us individually, nor deprive us generally, of any privilege or promise given unto Israel. That he never attempted to do so during the continuance of Israel as a nation, we have seen; and therefore, whatever statutes from the Talmud may be brought forward to startle us by their seeming to enslave us—we may rest quietly assured, first, that they might be explained away, were the whole examined, with the same ease as those prohibiting female witnesses, which we have noticed; secondly, that they were probably absolutely necessary at the time they were given, to preserve the feminine purity, gentleness, and modesty of the women of Israel unsullied; and lastly, if they will not abide either of these tests, and are absolutely and unanswerably enslaving, heathenizing, and degrading, that they have foundation in neither law nor tradition, and consequently possess no authority, and demand no obedience—their own incongruity with both the history as well as the law of Israel, being quite sufficient for their entire rejection and utter condemnation, alike by the Hebrew state as by individuals.

Precepts to insure the elevated position of the women of Israel were not in themselves sufficient to satisfy our ancient fathers. Besides the historical evidence that widows of kings could reign in their own right in Israel, we find many most beautiful allusions to woman in narrations, which, even granting they be but tradition, could only have sprung from the generally received idea of woman's dignity, gentleness, and influence, and also her vast capabilities of acquiring, and opportunities of using, the most erudite readings of the Law. We are told that the wisdom and learning of Beruria, the wife of R. Meir, were received with even more deference than those of Meir himself. She not only understood the written word, but left three hundred traditions, and is placed amongst the Tanaites, or expositors of the Mishna. Now, how could such an assurance be found in the Talmud, if religious knowledge and opportunities of deep and severe study were, either by a law of the state or public opinion, denied to woman? It is folly to suppose it, even for a moment. If some *modern* Jewish opinions, concerning the impossibility of woman comprehending the Law, or the presumption and folly of her attempting to make religion her study, had had existence then, why poor Beruria might have shared the fate of some of the hapless learned of the middle ages, who

were persecuted and burned, simply because their minds outstripped their age. But the memorable chroniclers of Beruria knew too well both the position and the capabilities of their countrywomen to refuse their appreciation and reverence when called upon to give them. Their affection for her memory is proved by the touching apologues in which she is brought forward, in a character so essentially feminine, that it is clear how completely they believed in the perfect compatibility of learning with every womanly feeling and attribute. To our countrywomen the brief notices are so well known, that it would be needless to repeat them, did we not hope that they would bring the Talmudic notices of woman in a somewhat novel light to our Christian friends.

Rabbi Meir appears to have been as impetuous and rash as his wife was gentle and judicious. Irritated at persecuting insults, which he had received from some sinful men in his neighborhood, he uttered an imprecation against them in the words of David: "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more." "You are wrong, my husband—such was not king David's meaning," was the soothing reply. "He prayed that *sin* might be consumed from off the earth, for then the wicked would be no more. He sought the destruction of *sin*, not of the sinners;" and, perfectly aware that the Hebrew quite authorized such rendering of the verse, the Rabbi acknowledged the justice of his wife's rebuke.

The other apologue of the same gentle feeling woman, is more generally known thro h the medium of Coleridge's "Friend." It was the custom of Rabbi Meir to attend the school and synagogue for several hours consecutively, often during the whole day—and, during one of these long absences from home, his sons, boys of great promise and beauty, both died. Conquering the anguish of a mother in the strong affection of a wife, who knew the passionate love borne by the father for his offspring, and dreading the effect of sudden grief, she met her husband at supper with her usual calm and tranquil mien. He naturally inquired for his sons, but she skilfully evaded the question, and, at the conclusion of the meal, stated that she had an important question to ask him, the answer to which had much troubled her. The rabbi encouraged her to speak; and she related, "that a neighbor had lent her some jewels of inestimable value, and now required them to be returned. Ought she to give

them back?" Surprised, the rabbi replied, "that surely his wife needed not even to ask the question, the answer was so self-evident." Without rejoinder, she led him into the room where the bodies lay, and, removing the white cloth which concealed them, revealed their loss. She permitted the first burst of agonized grief; and then, soothingly recalling his own verdict, touchingly repeated, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord?"

Can anything be more beautifully true to woman's nature than these brief tales? Even granted they cannot be proved as true, but are merely traditionary; what a high and beautiful sense of the female Israelite's capability and characteristics, must the ancient fathers have entertained! How contradictory to the modern assertion—that they degrade and enslave us, and so regard us with contempt! Accustomed to associate with such characters as Hannah, Abigail, Huldah, the Shunammite, and Esther, the sages knew that, to be highly gifted, learned, and wise, in a far nobler sense than the modern acceptation of the terms, and withal to be truly and exquisitely *feminine*, essentially the *woman*, was not the apocryphal combination which it is at present considered. The Talmudic writers *must* have thought highly and nobly of women, or such traits as we have brought forward, and those found in Hurwitz's Hebrew Tales, would never have been admitted within their volumes. Their minds were much too solemn, and too fond of weighty research, to allow such flights as romantic descriptions of woman's excellence; which, if only accustomed to regard their mothers, wives, and sisters, in a degraded light, these notices and even laws would be.

Surely then, even this brief and imperfect reference to the venerable volumes which—as reflections of some of the highest and the purest, the noblest and the holiest minds who ever labored for the good of man, and lived but to know and prove the glory of the Lord—we value from our very heart; even this may be permitted to remove some prejudice, and convince our opponents and ourselves, that not a thought so contrary to the spirit of the law as the degrading of woman either socially or individually, or even the non-caring for her weakness and her gentle nature, the refusing of all regard to her peculiarly feminine characteristics, ever entered the hearts or minds of our sages: their aim was to obey the law of God, and to provide

for and protect her as *woman*. The very laws that, on a mere hasty reading, might seem in their strictness to interfere with her perfect freedom of act and will, are only evidences of their desire to preserve the feminine beauty and modesty of her character unsullied, and more probably instituted at those times when the extreme laxity and rudeness of the nations around rendered them absolutely necessary, to keep the "Women of Israel" apart, that their holiness might never be profaned, even by casual association.

Oh! that we had but eloquence and influence sufficient to urge our brethren to engage in the glorious task of removing the dust and rubbish which persecution, prejudice, and ignorance, have gathered round the pure and simple lessons, the exquisite allegories and glowing diction of our ancient fathers, and to publish in the vernacular idiom of every land, the wisdom which those mighty tomes conceal! Give us our own! Compel us not, out of pure thirst, to seek the works of Gentile writers for commentators on the word of our God—for sympathy in our aspiring thoughts, for rest to our wearied souls, unable yet to understand the full beauty of the Bible, without some simple explanation which would flash light over the inspired pages, and so enable us to take them to our heart, and find consolation. Compel us not to turn to the Gentile works for these. Unseal the fountains of pure waters which our aged seers provided; give us their renderings of the moral law; their spirit and aphorisms; their orient imagery, which, in its power and imagination, will outvie every other. Give us their detail of Jewish history; do not compel us to abide by the details of those whose faith is opposed to our own, who believe us blinded and degraded, and whose peculiar views must inspire their pages. The Hebrew who would do this, however gradually—who would provide our youth with works from our own writers, simplified, if needed, to their comprehension, and selected as would best meet the spirit of the age, would, indeed, rank among the first and noblest benefactors of this kind, and would prove the love which, as an Israelite, should be borne in his heart towards Israel's sons and Israel's God.

CHAPTER III.

EFFECTS OF DISPERSION AND PERSECUTION —GENERAL REMARKS.

It would be irrelevant to our present task, besides extending our work to much too great a length, to attempt any detailed account of the Hebrew nation, from their dispersion to the present time; the third volume of Milman's History, and an admirable American work, History of the Jews, by Hannah Adams, commencing from the destruction of Jerusalem, and accompanying us through our varied destinies till some fifty years ago; besides many other works in the modern languages, which no doubt exist, though to us they may not be known, will give all the needful information of us, as a people.

One trifling incident we will, however, mention, ere we leave the history of the past, and conclude our work by a brief survey of the present. In the reign of the emperor Julian, an edict was issued for the re-erection of the Temple of Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, and the "restoration of the Jewish worship in all its splendor."

The commotion which this edict occasioned to the Jews in every quarter of the empire may be imagined. They crowded in vast numbers to Palestine, and their wealth poured forth in such lavish profusion, that even the tools they used were to be sanctified to the service by being made of the most costly materials—the *women* seconded their brethren, giving up every personal ornament and hoarded jewel to forward the glorious work. The prophets allude to the pride and folly of the women of Judea, loving their ornaments more than the law, as one of the iniquities from which Judea was to be purged; and it would seem by this mention, as if the propensity had been indeed crushed from the hearts of the women of Israel, and that even, as in the time of Moses, when to adorn the tabernacle they brought all their ornaments and the work of their hands till more than enough was given,—so, now, they are equally earnest and enthusiastic in the holy cause. The work was indeed

frustrated; for the word of the Lord had passed, and the land was to enjoy her sabbaths and the temple remain unbuilt, till, the term of exile past, repentant Israel might be recalled; but the mention of the eager zeal of the women of Israel marks how dear and precious to them, as well as to their brother man, was the religion of Jerusalem; that they must have known and felt that their temple service, and the law it included, gave them, as women, higher and nobler privileges than any other, or they could not have been so eager for its restoration.

Throughout our history, in all those horrible epochs of persecution, we can find not a single trace of the love of the Lord, and of his Holy Faith, burning with stronger and more enduring light, in man's heart than in woman's. The female Hebrew never shrank from any alternative however awful, which could save her or her children from the denial of their faith. Death of the most horrible kind was welcome, not only for themselves but (a trial far more awful) for their children, rather than the forcible baptism to which they were repeatedly exposed. No faith can bring forward a longer or more noble list of willing female martyrs; and what emotion could have inspired this devotion? What could have so triumphed over the emotions of humanity—the tremblings of the mortal frame—but the deepest love of their holy religion, the firmest conviction of its immutable truth, and an unwavering belief in the immortality which it was the first to teach, and which could alone have endowed weak clinging woman with the noble strength and constancy which taught her how to die? Let those who, in their utter ignorance of the spirit and tenets of the Jewish religion, dare to assert that we have no unbelief in the immortality of the soul, that it was neither taught by Moses and the prophets, nor preached and simplified by our ancient sages—let those, if they cannot read our venerable fathers, just glance back on the history of our people, and answer, what was it caused so many millions, women as well as men, to die rather than desert their faith? What availed such sacrifice, if they believed this earth were all? What mattered their creed in this life, if death were annihilation? No: our martyrs are our witnesses; and we need little other proof of the universality of the Jewish belief in immortality, than the countless numbers who have sealed its mighty truth in their own blood.

As our martyrs are witnesses of such belief, so are our

existence and preservation, of the Truth of the Revelation, of the perpetuity of that holy faith which God Himself proclaimed should last for ever. Where now are the mighty nations of Babylon and Rome, before whose conquering arms Judea lay prostrate, and her children fell mingling dust with dust, or were scattered to every quarter of the globe like chaff before the wind? *Where* are the mighty conquerors? Lost amid the dim shadows of the past: and *what* are they but names which *once* were great? But *where* are the conquered? Ask of every land and every age; and they will point to them as a people still, for ever PRESENT, never PAST: and *what* are they? God's people still—His witnesses, whom naught of earth and earthly change can touch. Nations and dynasties, conquerors and conquered, are swept from the face of the earth, leaving not a trace; but the persecuted, the oppressed, the tortured, the only nation which has seen millions and millions fall by the destroying sword, and in later times beheld but too many lost by smoother, but even more dangerous means;—that nation still lives, breathes unchanged, its ranks undiminished, its undying vitality seeming to receive increase of strength and firmness from every blow that seeks its downfall. Cemented by the blood of noble martyrs, supported by the pillars of divine truth, and wisdom, and love, it rears its head in every land, as a temple that will never fall, and all, man, woman, and child, who seek to love and obey the Lord according to His law vouchsafed to Moses, add to its solidity and beauty, and bear witness to its truth.

Our existence is in itself a miracle: naught but the providence of God could have thus preserved us; a nation so completely apart, that, though for more than eighteen centuries scattered over the whole world, and found in every land, our identity has never been lost, our race has never mingled, our religion has never changed. Our most vehement opposers grant us this; but they tell us, that we worship not now as Moses taught; that we are guided by the Talmud, not by God. We could reply, that if the one dared to contradict the other, no Jew would acknowledge its legality, or obey its dictates; but we wish to prove, that if our manners and customs do in some instances appear to differ from the spirit inculcated by our inspired lawgiver, it is the necessary consequence of our captivity, foreseen by God Himself, and provided for by the principal statutes contained in Levit. xxvi. ver. 39 to the end,

and Deut. xxx., which in clear and emphatic terms laid down all that was necessary for our acceptance.

Our law was given to a holy people, framed for a government and a nation which, in its domestic and political bearings, was to stand alone. When the sins and manifold rebellions of the children of Israel compelled their expulsion from the Holy Land, lost them the direct interference of their God, both by the Shechinah and by his prophets, and scattered them over the whole world, it was a part of their awful chastisement, that while the word of the Eternal preserved their *faith* and its holy ordinances unchanged, their *social, domestic,* and *individual* position should be guided no longer by the pure spirit of the Law, but by the spirit of the nations amongst whom they were thrown. Thus we always perceive that the Jews are in a measure civilized or barbarized, according as civilization or barbarism pervade the people amongst whom they dwell. How was it possible for them to retain the social and mental elevation, the pure spiritual religion, the loveliness of home which had marked them in their own land, when subjected to the oppression, the slavery, the cruelty, with which the history of the middle ages teems; when moral and mental darkness was all around them, seeking also to crush them under the fierce persecutions, which from such mental and moral darkness sprang; how could the mass retain the spirituality, the elevation of their ancestors? Individuals there were no doubt, who were Israelites indeed, spiritually and mentally, as well as rigid adherents to every form; but the mass must of necessity have shared the darkness of the oppressors under whom they groaned. Spiritually and mentally, social and domestic elevation demands and imperatively needs an atmosphere of equality and freedom, or they must either droop and die, or be shrouded in such secresy, and so closely next the heart, as to be entirely invisible in history.

This is proved by our history, in what is aptly termed by Milman, the "Golden Age of Judaism." It was, indeed, of very short duration; but during its continuance, we find "the Jews not only pursuing unmolested their lucrative and enterprising traffic, not merely merchants of splendor and opulence, but suddenly emerging to offices of dignity and trust, administering the finances of Christian and Mahomedan kingdoms, and travelling as ambassadors between mighty sovereigns."* In France, dur-

* Milman, vol. iii. p. 369.

ing the reign of Charlemagne, "from the ports of Marseilles and Narbonne, their vessels kept up a constant communication with the East." In Narbonne, of the two prefects (or mayors of the city) one was always a Jew; and the most regular and stately part of the city of Lyons was always the Jewish quarter. The superior intelligence and education of the Jews, during a period when nobles and kings and even the clergy could not always write their names, pointed them out for offices of trust. They were the physicians, and the ministers of finance, to nobles and to monarchs. And in the reign of Charlemagne, "Europe and Asia beheld the extraordinary spectacle of a Jew named Isaac, setting forth with two Christian counts, one of whom died on the road, as ambassador from Charlemagne to Haroun Al Raschid, and conducting the political correspondence between the court of Aix-la-Chapelle and Bagdad."*

In Spain, both under the influence of Moorish and Christian sovereigns, the golden age of Judaism endured the longest, to set in the deepest darkness. The long line of literary men, who swelled the Jewish ranks during that epoch, sufficiently mark the influence of freedom and prosperity upon the *mind*—while the writings of Maimonides are pretty certain evidence of their effect upon the *spirit*. In the calm and dignified repose of the social position which that golden age allowed him, Maimonides advanced so much beyond his times and country that, like all benefactors of their kind, he was neither understood nor appreciated by his contemporaries. But the more enlightened our nation has become, the more have his profound wisdom and spiritual revelations of the wisdom and goodness of the Deity, as displayed in the Law of Moses, been valued and appreciated, and the more they will be as the Jewish mind advances.

The iron age, *preceding* the golden one, had originally cramped the intellectual and spiritual powers of the mass. They had been content and glad to tread the path laid down for them by their teachers, without inquiring *wherefore* they thus worshipped. Even their teachers, except a select and holy few, had accustomed themselves to regard the magnificent fabric of the Mosaic Law with silent adoration and admiring wonder; but Maimonides, in his daring and all-conquering wisdom, looked on it with the searching light of reason, as well as the

* Milman's Hist., vol. iii. p. 280—281.

living orb of faith; and *how* he was spiritually rewarded, let his beautiful writings testify. His contemporaries were dazzled by the lustre he flung upon the meaning and intentions of the holy Law, and feared to approve it; but his labor was not lost. The flash, too bright to illuminate his own age,* penetrated the folds of the far future, and spreading gradually, found souls prepared to meet and welcome it, and shrine in their heart of hearts the glorious mind whose wisdom had kindled it to life.

But for many, many terrible years, even the memory of the golden age was buried under the dense pall of misery and oppression which gathered round the hapless Israelites in every land, and so crushed all mental and social elevation, so confined the sphere of action and employment, so banished all religious instruction, except such as could be imparted in the deepest secresy, that the word Jew became and has continued synonymous with all that is debased—with a bowed and bowing servility, with exacting usury, with hard exclusiveness, and with a merciless hatred of all mankind, and a detestation of every religion but his own. Aye, even now, to those who have never associated with us, whose only knowledge is drawn from books —whose authors, with but two noble exceptions,† seem to delight in fabling us as the Shylock of Shakspeare, the old clothesman of nursery tales (noticed thus even by Miss Edgeworth), or as the money-lenders, interest-exactors, and dishonorable adepts in all the grades of usury which abound in fashionable novels. And little, perhaps, do their writers know that their fictions demonstrate far more clearly the consequences of persecution, which their ancestors have hurled upon us, than the real character of the Jew, or the true spirit of his creed. Writers who know us not, depict us, not what we *are*, but what lingering prejudice creates us, entirely forgetting the *real cause*

* Wisdom like his becomes to the unenlightened "dark from excess of light."

† Sir Walter Scott, in his exquisite delineation of Rebecca and her father; and Mrs. S. C. Hall, in her breathing portrait of Manasseh Ben Israel, in the "Buccaneer," where she has so beautifully and skilfully blended all the characteristics of the Talmudic Israelite, with the emotions and virtues of a father and a man—a union which most authors appear to imagine incompatible. The character of Sidonia, in "Coningsby," is not a being of flesh and blood, but a type of a class; and therefore we do not include him, though the author has done us justice as a *nation*.

of our fallen state—the impossibility of our attaining to that elevated social state which freedom and peace have granted to other lands, while bent to the very earth, and for ever liable, even at this very present, to insult, ignominy, and such oppressions as even slavery does not know. The mischief which is done by such false pictures of the Jewish character in social and domestic life is incalculable. It not only fosters prejudice and confirms ignorance in our opponents, but actually causes many Jews themselves to tremble at the term, and to endeavor to conceal a faith and descent which should be their glory. Even those domestic narrations which portray some members of a Jewish family in a favorable light, that they may conclude by making them Christians, and the other members as so stern, harsh, and oppressive, that they bear no resemblance whatever to any Israelite, except the Israelite of a Gentile's imagination—do but swell the catalogue of dangerous because false works; and never fail to impress the minds of Christian readers with the unalterable conviction, that whenever spirituality, amiability and gentleness, kindliness and love, are inmates of a Hebrew heart, it is an unanswerable proof that that heart is verging on Christianity, and will very speedily embrace that faith. Nay, mental endowments themselves are welcomed as an earnest that their possessors must quickly desert the Jewish creed; such supposers entirely forgetting that mental acquirements, the most profound and searching wisdom, the most vivid and beautiful imagination, the most elegant accomplishments, have been the heir-loom of the Jewish nation, from their very first election as the chosen of the Lord; and that, instead of losing these endowments in their dispersion, all of mind and talent in the whole European and Asiatic world was possessed by them; and that Gentiles of every denomination and every creed came with humility and deference to them, glad to learn from the *oppressed* those glorious gifts of mind which to the *oppressors* were denied.

It is not from the present state of the Hebrews, that the true spirit of their creed and their characteristics as a nation can be discovered. They have, indeed, retained all that marks them as a distinct people, and prevents amalgamation with the children of the soil, in which they are but sojourners; but their social and domestic habits are now so completely one with the manners and customs of the lands in which they are scattered, that there is nothing to distinguish them from their Gentile

brethren; and this it is which often causes the false portraits of Jewish character, when introduced in tales of the present day. They think a Jew must be different to his fellows, and so call him from the Past, when oppression forced upon him a particular character, and place him in the Present, where he looks about as much out of place as a mail-clad baron and his rude-mannered suite would seem, in the luxurious and refined assemblage of England's present peers. As a people—as the chosen witnesses—the first-born sons of the Most High God, they will ever remain a distinct nation over the whole world. They will ever be preserved from annihilation—ever be kept from all assimilation with the Gentiles; even as the river, which is said to retain its peculiar taste and coloring in the very lakes through which it passes. But the Jews in captivity are not what they *have been*, or what they *will be*. Even while they remain a distinct race, they have unconsciously imbibed many of the characteristics of the people amongst whom they dwell. The indomitable pride, the haughty air of superiority, which (not fifty years since) characterized the Spanish and Portuguese Jew, were of Spain and Portugal, not of Judea; and if we examine the condition of the poorest classes of that congregation, and compare them with the same ranks in Spain and Portugal, we shall find them so exactly similar, that the pride, poverty from dislike to labor, indolence and dirt,* are the remnants of their assimilation with the manners and customs of the above-named countries; not the characteristics of Judaism, which especially commands honest labor and most scrupulous cleanliness. The active business habits, and rather a want than a superfluity of pride, in the German Jews, mark their assimilation in domestic and social habits with the Gentile inhabitants of Germany and Holland; the distinction between them and their (so called) Spanish and Portuguese brethren, which was very much more marked fifty years ago than it is now, originates not at all in Judaism, whose beautiful unity ought to banish all such conventional terms, but simply in the distinction which exists between the characteristics of the different countries in which they dwelt. Observe the Spaniard and Portuguese, and then

* Of course there are exceptions. We allude but to some of the very lowest of our nation, still unhappily plunged in the ignorance and superstition, the still remaining results of the persecution and slavery of Spain and Portugal.

look on the German and the Dutchman; their characteristics are so totally distinct, that it is impossible to mistake them; and the Jewish inmates of these diverse lands naturally shared the distinction, even while their holy law was the undying link which bound them together, and separated them from the religion of every other land. Fifty years ago, the Sephardim congregation* was considered so superior to the Ashkenazim,† as to be universally acknowledged as the aristocracy of the nation; but this supposition had nothing to do with Israelitish notions. It was, in fact, contrary to the spirit of the Jewish law, which, except in the beautiful organization of ranks in the state, looked on all Jews as equal, and on the whole nation as the aristocracy of the Lord. The modern distinction simply arose from the fact, that in Spain and Portugal the Jews had held the highest stations in the court and camp and council; that even after their expulsion, they existed apparently as Christians, but in reality most faithful Jews, amongst the very nobles and princes in both countries; or as merchants and doctors, not only in medicine, but in various branches of learning: and so wealthy as always to take their places amongst the aristocracy of the land. Germany has indeed ennobled a Jew; and latterly our most learned men have sprung from German schools. But *contemporary* with the Jewish aristocracy of Spain and Portugal, the Jews in Germany were so oppressed, and enslaved as never to rise above those confining and debasing employments which must ever be the consequence of persecution; and therefore when the two parties met on equal ground, the free and blessed soil of England, the haughty pride of the *Spaniard* (not of the *Jew*, for that would have counselled differently) caused that exclusiveness even from his German brother, which formerly had existence, but which happily is now fading rapidly into the past. England offers a rest and home of perfect freedom to the exile and oppressed: and if she welcomes all, will Israel continue that mistaken distinction which only circumstances wrought? That there is still a difference in the characteristics of German and Portuguese, we allow; and very probably, so constitutional is prejudice in favor of one's own, that neither would change with the other; but the difference and the prejudice are alike foreign to *Judaism*. These are the effects of our dispersion; of sixteen

* Spanish and Portuguese. † German.

or seventeen centuries of assimilation with the manners and customs of Germany and Spain, which unconsciously makes us feel so completely as children of the soil, that we forget the national unity which our holy religion so imperatively demands, and which will be gradually attained; but it requires time. Enthusiasm may believe it is only to be wished, to be accomplished; but reason tells us, that *two* centuries in England is not quite sufficient to banish the prejudices of *fifteen* centuries spent in other lands. We have neither of us yet become English in feeling; nay, very many take pleasure in fostering as a heritage the remnant of Spanish feelings, forgetting that such characteristics have nothing to do with Judaism; and till we are really English Jews, the distinction which has existed so many centuries will never be entirely lost. The Germans will much more easily become English than the Spanish, simply because the national characteristics between England and Germany are less distinct and palpable than those between England and Spain.

In exactly the same manner, the Jews, wherever they are scattered, have imbibed prejudices, customs, and even the sentiments which belong—not to their religion, but to the lands of their captivity and compelled adoption. The very prejudice, to remove which this book has been written—the Jewish degradation of woman, her abasement in the social system, as a non-partaker of religious responsibility and immortality—if traced to its source, will be found to have originated in the blinded notions of the Jews of Barbary, and other Eastern countries; infused unconsciously by the contempt for the sex peculiar to the Mahomedan inhabitants of those lands. Other prejudices and superstitions, supposed by the unobservant to be part of Judaism, proceed from exactly the same reason, and have nothing whatever to do with the religion of God.

The travellers in the Crimea speak of the filth and rapacity, and occasional dishonesty of the Jews dwelling in that quarter, as the necessary consequence of their blinded religion, quite forgetting that they are but the characteristics of the Russian and Cossack inhabitants of the same land, and imbibed by the Jews as the necessary consequence of such long and close association, but utterly repugnant to the spirit of their creed.

The Polish Jews, again, are different from the German and Dutch, much more resembling the Spanish and Portuguese, because their *social position* was more like the latter than the

former. Whilst Poland was an independent kingdom, the Jews formed the only middle order. Their privileges had been secured by Casimir the Great, from the affection felt by him towards a beautiful Jewess. They were the corn-merchants, shop-keepers, inn-keepers, in fact almost every branch of traffic was confined to them; they formed the principal population of towns, and some villages were exclusively peopled by them. This social freedom accounts for the dignified bearing and generally lofty character of the Polish Jew, at once distinguishing him from his cowed and oppressed brethren of Germany. Even now Poland is the principal seat of rabbinical authority. The religion, from the supremacy of forms and minute ordinances, occasions a greater degree of rigidity and exclusiveness than is the case elsewhere, where the spirit of the Mosaic Law is more freely awaking. Since the partition of Poland, however, the condition of the Jewish population is as oppressed and lowered, as their brethren under the Russian, Prussian, and Austrian Governments. But still the Polish Jew, like the Spanish and Portuguese, retains the peculiar characteristic of his former more elevated position.

The French and Italian Jews have equally the peculiar characteristics of their adopted lands, but they are less marked than those of Germany and Spain, the above-named lands not having been their residence for such a long continuance. But wherever we are scattered, still the truth is evident, that though our law and its beautiful forms remain unchangeable, immutable as their divine ordinance, our social and domestic customs are modified and characterized, according to the manners and customs of the lands of our exile. We are still captives of our God, though His mercy grants us a social freedom and relief from persecution; and in captivity how might we hope that the spirit of our holy law could be permitted to pervade our households? The consequence of transgression was to expel us from our own lovely land, to raise a barrier between us and the direct interference of the Lord, to scatter us as by a whirlwind over the known world, and there so to degrade us from our high estate, from being subject to the Most High God alone, that the guiding spirit of our homesteads was lost in the darkened barbarism of the Gentile world.

And so it is with the Jews of the present day. English writers, when they introduce the nation, overlook the Jewish

inmates of their own land, and delineate either the Spanish, or the German, or the Polish, or the Russian Jews; and as the picture they draw is necessarily quite distinct from their own manners and customs, they believe themselves, and make others believe, that it is a perfect portrait of the Jew, whereas it is in fact nothing more nor less than a delineation of the Spaniard, or Pole, or German, who might just as correctly be of the Gentile as of the Jewish creed.* To draw the Jew correctly then, not his present condition, but the annals of the past must provide materials. For the spirit and ordinances of his beautiful faith, let the word of the Lord be consulted, and the most simple mind must understand what and why the Jew believes, and the forms that he obeys. Where modern Judaism, so called, differs from that standard, it is not the religion which has changed, but circumstances which have occasioned the Jews unconsciously to adopt the feelings, superstitions, and sentiments, the offspring of that darkness which is the atmosphere of persecution, or of that prosperity which has infused the sentiments and superstitions of the Gentiles, with whom they live in reality in close association, while in appearance their differing creeds keep them widely apart. Let it be remembered, we allude not to the *religion*—that never has, and never will amalgamate—that will ever be a thing sacred and apart, will never change, nor modify, nor alter—God hath said it shall last for ever, that its children will never cease from being a nation before Him for EVER—and SO IT WILL BE. The assimilation in social, domestic, and individual life of the Jew and Gentile, touches not their respective creeds. Wherever he is, in whatever land, whatever company, whatever position, a Hebrew is known as a Hebrew—and he should glory in that distinction ordained by God Himself, to keep His people apart—should use his utmost endeavor to preserve that distinction—and neither be ashamed of it himself, nor

* This extraordinary misconception of their own subject was never more clearly marked, than in the works entitled "Sophia and Emma de Lissau, a fiction of the Jews, of the nineteenth century;" where, placing the scene in *England*, and in the present era, the author gives an imaginary picture of the *Polish* Jews, at least one or two centuries back, and containing not the very smallest resemblance to *English Jewish* life at any time; in fact, there is nothing to write concerning Anglo-Jewish life in the present age. With the sole exception of the ordinances of their creed, their households and families are conducted exactly on the same principles as English households of the same standing.

occasion others to look down upon him with contempt. He can retain all the characteristics of his race and creed, and yet in social, domestic, and individual position, be one with the children of that land which has received the exiles to her fostering breast, and extended the right hand of fellowship to all. Let us be English men and English women, even while we still glory in being Hebrews. The union is perfectly compatible, and it would tend to our social happiness and the consolidation of our national unity. Would it not render us a firmer, nobler, because a more consolidated mass, if we could forget the distinctions of German and Spanish, and Polish and Dutch, and only vie with each other to be a noble body of English Jews, and mark our pre-eminence in the land where we are FREE? Why should there be German and Spanish charities! Is not benevolence open-handed, universal, wide-spreading, scorning earthly distinctions, and only seeking whom it can befriend? Is not a Hebrew a Hebrew, in the sight of God and Man—and why then should we not be brothers? Why will not the German imitate the Spaniard in some things, and the Spaniard the German in others, and so forget the idle distinctions of our captivity, and only strive to become Hebrews as our Bibles teach, and Englishmen as a love for our adopted country would dictate? How glorious would be that consolidation, that unity, which, the moment a Jew of any land sets foot in England there to make his home, would hail him brother, and open to him at once our synagogues and our charities, without one question as to what congregation he belonged to! Hebrews and Englishmen—we may look round the world, but what prouder titles can be our own!

This may seem digression; but, as we proceed, we shall find it not so wholly unconnected with our main subject as it may appear. Not only are our social and domestic habits infused with the manners and customs of the lands of our captivity, but our mental and spiritual attainments are in some degree advanced or retrograded, according to the measure of mental and spiritual attainments in our Gentile brethren. This is easily explained, by comparing our positions in Italy, in Russia, in parts of Germany, and in the East; with our position in England, in America, in France, and in Belgium.

Italy is still plunged in moral and mental darkness. The word of God, revealed only to priests, to whom the consciences

of the multitude are intrusted, is unknown, and, in consequence, edicts are still at work against us, as oppressive and degrading as in the middle ages. Russia, under a despot-sovereign, and unenlightened by the religion of the Protestant, which, from considering the Old Testament divine, and permitting its perusal by the mass, cannot fail greatly to benefit the Jew, entirely prevents, by a precarious and degraded position, all power of elevation in its Hebrew subjects; and on the least, even imaginary offences, issues edicts against us as horrible as any of less enlightened times.* Austria, under Catholic dominion, by a most extraordinary contradiction, grants a barony to a Jewish family, and yet, if we are to believe contemporary travellers, so degrades the Jews as a class, that their condition is little removed from most abject slavery.

In the East, under the superstitious and oppressive sway of Mahomedanism, they are still constantly liable to persecution,† and cruelty too horrible to relate. And what then is the condition of our hapless brethren in these oppressive lands? Still faithful Hebrews indeed, willing to die, or worse, to suffer such horrible mental and physical tortures that death were bliss, rather than give up one item of their treasured faith; but the mind is cramped, the spirit fettered, the soul cannot spring upwards, in that mental and spiritual communing, only to be found amongst the free; and God, more merciful than man, demands not what His omniscience knows cannot be given. Enough, they are true to Him, they worship, they love Him. The power to spiritualize and enlighten that worship by rays of mind, will be granted when His will removes the yoke, now bowing them to the earth.

In Germany, the state of the religion seems strangely contradictory. Our most learned men come from that land. The spirit of their faith, in some few quarters, appears awaking, or we could not have such preachers as Gotthold, Solomon, Philipson, Hirsch, and others; and yet how appalling is the indifferentism, the rationalism, which seems to compass, as a thick mist, the greater portion! But this is not Judaism; it has its origin, exactly as we have stated, in the spirit of the land where the Hebrews are sojourners. What is the real religion of Germany? Ask the enlightened Protestant, and he will tell

* The late Ukase. † The Damascus Cruelties of 1840.

you; but too often rank infidelism, indifference, or that religion which seeks to do away with revelation, and rest on nature (alas for such delusion!); and fearful is this association for the Jew, just beginning to breathe from the oppressive horrors of persecution. Better, far, even occasional oppression, so it will but burst the bonds of that deadening stagnation; better the complete and visible distinction of creeds, than that fearful indifference to all, which appears to characterize religion in Germany. But let not the Gentile seek to burden *Judaism* with the indifference of the Jews in Germany, or the Hebrew may, with equal justice, burden Christianity with the indifference and infidelism of Christians in the same land.

In France, the Jews are free, enlightened, earnest Israelites, and faithful citizens; and yet, if the writer of the review of the "Spirit of Judaism" in the "Archives" of March, 1843, spoke the sentiments of all his countrymen, we should fear that equality was, in some degree, deadening that national spirit of religious exclusiveness which should ever mark the Jew.* We should, indeed, feel and act the part of faithful citizens where such privileges are allowed us; but we are not to consider ourselves so completely children of the soil as to forget we are children of the Lord. That privilege can never belong to the history of the past, as the writer seems, in some degree, to suppose. We can never be other than a distinct nation—His chosen people; and so, be favored above every nation and every religion of the world. Surely we can unite this belief with the feelings of a French or English citizen. We do not require the sacrifice of the one to fit us for the other; for the more we felt that, as Hebrews, we were cherished, equalized, honored, the more ardent would become our love for the land granting us these things, the more earnest our desire to serve her and her children, with heart and hand.

But this absence of perfect nationality, if, indeed, it do exist,

* The following is the passage in question:—"Mais Miss Aguilar dépasse peut-être le but, et dans son zèle ardent pour le maintien de l'esprit de Judaisme, elle néglige parfois trop l'esprit du siècle. Les Juifs, à ses yeux, forment non seulement une *secte* à part; ils forment aussi une nation à part, une nation captive, et dans l'attente de son Messiah ou libérateur. . . . *La Nationalité Juive n'existe plus.* Partout et même dans les contrées où on leur conteste encore les droits de l'homme et du citoyen, les Juifs s'efforcent à prouver qu'ils sont de la même nation que ceux, dont ils partagent le sol, et ne *sont Juifs que devant Dieu.*"

is attributable, not to imperfection in Judaism, but to intimate association with a people whose characteristic is light-hearted gaiety, and whose very religion is devoid of the solemnity of form and sacredness of restriction peculiar to Protestant lands. The French, as a nation, are *spirituelle*, but not *spiritual*. The freedom and equality enjoyed by the French Jews, have, to judge by their literature, decidedly advanced the latter quality. Mind and spirit are both unshackled; but it is neither unlikely nor unnatural, that they should in some degree imbibe the light spirit of their Gentile brethren, and so appear to divest their faith of a portion of its more solemn and exclusive attributes, though in reality they are earnest and faithful Israelites still.

But it is in the country of the *true*, not of the *nominal* Protestant, that the Hebrew is at rest, and where his religion will attain to greater vitality and strength and spirituality than in any other land. The reason for this is obvious; not only because in real Protestant countries persecution of the Jew is a thing unheard of, and never has existed from the time it gained ascendency, but because the Protestant religion, in its morality, its reverence for the Old Testament, its acknowledgment of the Jews as the chosen people of the Lord, its spirituality, its abhorrence of all image-worship, comes nearer the *spirit* of the Jewish religion than any other creed; even whilst in its actual doctrines, that of a trinity, a dying Saviour, an infinite atonement, and original sin, it is the most *widely opposed;* but actual *creed*, absolute doctrines of belief, are of far less moment in a multitude, than the *spirit* of a faith. If we present the Athanasian creed to fifty individuals, taken from mixed ranks, it is a question whether ten out of the fifty will tell you that they believe it as it stands, or whether they have not modified it, according to the temperaments of individual minds and the reasoning of individual studies; and yet, they would shrink in horror from being considered anything but earnest Protestants and faithful Christians. Actual belief is *individual*, but the spirit of a faith is *universal*, and, therefore, in relation to the position of the Jews, the latter is of infinitely more consequence than the former. When we know and perceive that the whole moral and spiritual system of the Protestant faith is literally grafted on the moral and spiritual (not the ceremonial) revelation vouchsafed to Moses,

and, as in the latter days, simplified to the meanest understanding by our elders; we must feel satisfied that our position must be infinitely securer and happier than where the spirit of a religion is concealed from the mass, and confined to their (so called) spiritual teachers, or in those lands where the moral laws are totally distinct from our own. Let me repeat and enforce the repetition, that by the spiritual system common to the Protestants and Jews, I do not in the very least allude to doctrinal points, for in our *articles* of creed we are *utterly*, *entirely*, and *necessarily* opposed; but simply, to the mutual belief of immortality, and that heaven is infinitely preferable to earth; to our mutually binding laws, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy soul, and all thy might; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;" to both being commanded to practise charity, modesty, humility, brotherly love, forgiveness of injuries, unquestioning faith, and child-like obedience. It would detain us too long to dilate on all the points on which we agree; points, it would be well for both parties to ponder on more frequently, but which too often become invisible, from the too often haughty arrogance of the Christian, refusing to us the very privileges, spiritual and moral, which he has derived from us alone; and from the more charitable, but equally mistaken, seeking our conversion, as the only means of our salvation, and of our attaining a true knowledge of God, when, from us, and us alone, their knowledge of the Eternal and their hopes of heaven are derived.

But while, from the spirit pervading Protestant laws (a spirit springing from the simple, but important fact that the BIBLE, the WHOLE BIBLE, is open to rich and poor, prince and peasant, man, woman, and child), our social position is secure, and we assimilate more closely to our Gentile brother; let it not be forgotten that our spiritual position is begirt with more danger than when the differences between our holy religion and that of other nations were more strongly marked. Would we be Israelites indeed we must study the *doctrines* and adhere to the *forms*, as well as be infused with the *spirit* of our faith. We must learn in what we differ so widely from our Gentile brother that, while we acknowledge the same moral law, and experience the same spiritual aspirations, there should be such an impassable barrier between us that we must ever keep

apart, guarded as by invulnerable mail, from the constant attempts to lure us from our creed. The more closely we examine and study our own faith, and in riper years the more we look into the religion of other creeds, the more clearly shall we understand the vital points of difference, and the very many of agreement, and we shall rise from such study with love tenfold increased towards our own faith, and charity redoubled towards our Gentile brethren.

If, then, as all will agree, the cause of the superior enlightenment, freedom, morality, and charity of Protestant lands, originates in the fact of their possessing, and believing, and preaching the spirit of the WHOLE BIBLE—ours as well as theirs, it is clearly evident why the Hebrew in such lands can become more spiritual, more earnest, and more exalted, mentally and individually. In the first place he is FREE! and the mind and spirit, released from the shackles of darkness and persecution, can once more resume the native dignity, and mental superiority, and spiritual aspirations peculiar to his race and creed, and which, through long ages of oppression, were invisible indeed, but never lost. In the next he mingles with a people, free, enlightened, spiritual, moral, benevolent, become so from the spirit of the same *moral* law as guides himself; and the atmosphere, congenial to his native tastes and native feelings, inspires him with a spirit of nationality and elevation which circumstances have long denied him, but to which he returns with zest and earnestness, glad to burst from the stagnating indifference which is the unavoidable successor of brutalizing persecution.

If, then, as we have endeavored to show, the social and domestic habits, nay, the very character of the Hebrews must, during their captivity, in some degree be modified, altered, infused, according to the manners, customs, and characteristics of the nations in which we are captives, even while our faith and its holy ordinances still mark us a people apart, a distinct and never assimilating nation; it is forcibly evident that the Israelites in England have greater advantages, and more, therefore, is demanded from them than in any other land (America, perhaps, alone excepted). Of America, as a nation, we know not enough to attempt discussion on her domestic character and habits, and how such may improve the character of her adopted children. The Hebrew advantages in that land, more numerous even than in England, consist in perfect freedom; so that neither civil,

military, nor naval disabilities, interfere with his elevation in any art, science, or profession to which his talents point; thus neither persecution nor interference can prevent his guiding, not only his public adherence to his religion, but the sanctity of his house, according to the domestic, as well as social and ceremonial laws of Moses; and he is free to become mentally and spiritually elevated, and to raise the name of Israelite by deed as well as faith—these are his advantages in America: and fearful is his responsibility if he passes them by unused.

But on the character of the English there is no darkness in our mind—integrity—honor—solidity—reserve, which only renders his friendship, when given, more worthy—a lofty spirit of independence and consciousness of his own position, as distinct from the radical contemner of differing ranks as respect from servility—benevolence—domestic virtue which, in either man or woman, must make home happy—intellect and genius, which can only breathe in freedom—such are the characteristics of the English; and if they fail in the sparkling vivacity and apparent warmth of the French, the artistic genius and strong passions of the Italians, the music and metaphysics of the Germans, surely they have qualities sufficient of their own, to make us truly love the land, and thank God that He has granted his captives so secure and blessed a rest. Nobly, then, in England may Judaism make manifest her spiritual, her elevating influence on the characters of her children; for the manners and customs of her Gentile brethren in this blessed land, instead of infusing characteristics foreign to the Jew, will but forward his advance in the scale of being, recall every minor moral law, which oppression had banished, and encourage every elevating, humanizing, and intellectual power, which, in the eras of persecution and darkness, seemed to have departed. The son of Israel may now cultivate the intellect and genius natural to his distinguished race. He can now prove, that if ever he were debased, it was not his religion, but the slavery of oppression which was at fault; if ever spirituality seemed to have departed, torture had banished it from his heart—but that once free—it was the life, the breath, the glory of his faith; that without it Judaism was not Judaism, but a lifeless worship, only rendered acceptable by obedience in the midst of woe. And what may not the Women of Israel become in this thrice blessed land?

Much, much to recall what they have been, and to shadow forth what they will be!

At length we have reached the point at which, throughout this concluding period, we have aimed, and towards which all our remarks have tended. In every other country but England and America, still lingering restrictions, or characteristics peculiar to the children of the soil, may prevent or retard the spiritual and domestic graces which are the woman of Israel's own —and of which, however deadened by circumstances, nothing can deprive her; but in England and America these can be cultivated, fostered, and so displayed, as to mark to the whole Gentile world, our national privileges, our sacred duties, and our immortal hope. We have seen from the very commencing of our creation, the natural position of the granted gifts, and inherited failings of our sex. We have looked with an unshrinking gaze on every mention of woman in the word of our God, from the mother of the whole human race, and the ancestresses of Israel, to the females under the law, and the beautiful captive, by whom a nation was preserved from death; we have gone still further, from the records of Josephus, to draw forth every mention of our noble ancestors, that we might learn their domestic and social position at a time when inspired historians were silent; we have scanned every statute, every law, alike in the words of Moses, and in their simplifying commentary by our elders; and the result of such examination has been, we trust, to convince every woman of Israel of her immortal destiny, her solemn responsibility, and her elevated position, alike by the command of God, and the willing acquiescence of her brother man. That IF any laws derogatory and contradictory to the station assigned her before God and man, by the merciful providence of our Father in Heaven, *have* sullied our homesteads, they come from the darkened ages of barbarism and persecution, the spirit of which naturally infused the minds of the captives, as well as of the captors—and have neither authority nor weight. They have, indeed, ever been but words; for if we scan the Jewish households in every age, we shall find the mothers, and wives, and daughters of Israel, treated with such unfailing respect, tenderness, and consideration, as would shame the homes of many a Gentile land. We can find not the very faintest evidence of debasing or restricting laws: and once con-

vinced, as surely we must be, that in the sight of God the women of Israel are cherished, loved, provided for, as He provided for none other; and in the sight of man, are elevated, respected, and fostered in every relation of life; must we not think earnestly and deeply how best to make manifest our own conviction of our spiritual, social, and domestic responsibilities; and by our superiority in holiness, and in every virtue that makes home happy, and our sex beloved, prove, far more forcibly than the most eloquent words, the utter falsity of the charge against us, and that Judaism indeed gives us all we need.

According to our ancient fathers, whose opinion is evidently founded on our holy law, the mission of the women of Israel is education: and this, even as in olden times, we can still accomplish. We have written so much on this all-important point in our notice of Jochebed, and again in the "Martyr Mother," that little is needed in addition now: but earnestly we would entreat our sisters in Israel to compare their lot with that of those hapless wives and mothers, who, in the middle ages, continually beheld their sons and daughters snatched from them and forcibly baptized, or murdered before their very eyes; and, somewhat later, were compelled to send them to convents and monastic schools for education, implanting, as they could, the religion of their fathers. At the time of their expulsion from Spain, and when reaching the town of Fez, they hoped their sufferings were coming to a close, a pirate lured 150 youths on board his ship, and in the very sight of the distracted parents set sail, and sold them as slaves in some distant port. In Portugal the youth were baptized by force, and drafted off to the unwholesome island of St. Thomas; and in the reign of Emanuel, son-in-law of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Jews were not only ordered to quit the kingdom generally by a certain day; but a secret edict issued that all the children under fourteen years of age should be torn from the arms of their parents, and dispersed through the kingdom to be baptized and brought up as Christians. The awful secret transpired, and lest it should be frustrated was instantly put into execution. What woman of Israel, be she mother, sister, or childless wife, can imagine the terror of this awful edict—can portray in her fancy, not only the hapless children torn from their mothers by brutal savages, but their mothers themselves, rendered desperate by

the agonizing alternative, throwing their offspring into wells and rivers, destroying them with their own hands, and yet not feel her whole being quiver with the burst of thanksgiving, that in some lands these awful days are past. Ever and anon, indeed, comes even now the low groan of Jewish suffering from distant shores. Damascus, Russia, Mogadore, within the last seven years, have vied with the oppressive cruelties of long-past days; cruelties at which every mother's heart must quake, and which bid every woman of Israel cling closer and closer yet to those nobler lands that give her a peaceful home, and so grant the sweet charities of life, and the affections, vitality and joy.

Even where the tempest-clouds of persecution have passed away, the spiritual atmosphere for the Jewish captives is deadened and stagnated by restricting clauses, which, directly contradictory to the spirit of Judaism, must have originated in former oppressive decrees, although, as the decrees themselves have been removed (though not their consequences), the religion is falsely supposed itself to be the cause. In some parts of Germany, for instance, young unmarried females are forbidden to worship in the synagogues—it being considered indecorous to make their appearance there, unless engaged or wedded. There may be other customs equally enslaving; but we are cautious in repeating any but those we know to be true. We see they are the remnants of oppression, not the ordinances of the religion, by the simple fact, that where we are free, the women of Israel take, unquestioned, the place, both in the synagogue and in the household, assigned them by our law.

When, therefore, we reflect on these things, and then on the spirit awakening in England, America, the Colonies, France, and no doubt in many parts of other lands (though working secretly and almost unconsciously, as all improvements do at first, we see it not so broadly flashing as in the above-named lands); shall we not as a body do all we can to forward and confirm the advantages proffered? Fifty years ago, from the still lingering dread of exposing our peculiar tenets to members of other creeds, Judaism, though faithfully followed, and all its ordinances obeyed, never found voice in our households, much less in more public places of worship; we dared not speak or write of it, lest unwittingly we should offend, and so be exposed again to the horrors of persecution. Was it marvel, then, that

we were Jews only because our fathers were, and that the vital spirit of piety seemed dead within us? Judging from us at that time, we do not wonder that some more enlightened of the Gentiles should pronounce the Jewish religion to be void of all spirituality, and so a lifeless worship. They could know nothing of us but what they saw; and they were not likely to look so deep as to behold the origin of this stagnation, in the stupifying terror and ever present dread of oppressive persecution. But now, if we do not labor heart and soul to make manifest that our religion is the most spiritual, the most life-breathing, comfort-giving religion of any over the known world, the fault is with us, and us alone. We need no longer be Jews because our fathers were. In the synagogue our religion is taught; in our households the Bible is our companion; our daughters as well as our sons are instructed as our Great Lawgiver himself commanded.

In France, in some parts of Germany, in some of the Colonies, and in one synagogue of England, girls, as well as boys, are examined in their faith, and admitted to the beautiful rite of confirmation; and this we foresee will gradually extend over all our congregations. The Hebrew language is now taught, studied, known, as any other modern tongue. The time may, nay it WILL come, though it seems a wild dream now, when it shall again be the language of the Israelites, not alone wherein to pray, but to converse, and write, as the vernacular idiom of the lands in which we are sojourners. Our girls, equally with our boys, are attaining real grammatical knowledge of this most glorious language, and in their youth are thus imbibing treasures, which, when in their turn they become mothers, will be imparted to their children, and so mark them from their earliest infancy, Hebrews, as well as English, French, or German. To our daughters, as to our sons, the Bible is unsealed; and its explanation is fearlessly given by many a Jewish preacher. Books of Jewish sacred literature are rising in the vernacular of the many lands of our captivity; and the time is gone by when man might fear to call himself a Jew. In the countries so often quoted, the more a Hebrew respects his creed, the more he is respected; the more spiritually enlightened he is in the doctrines, the ordinances, the commands of his own religion, the more will he find himself appreciated and valued by the spiritual-minded of even opposing creeds; and the more universal will be

his brotherly love, for the less dangerous will be social intercourse.

Will not then the women of Israel do all they can to prove how deeply and earnestly they feel these things? They are free now not only to believe and obey, but to study and speak of their glorious faith. To look themselves within their Bibles, and read there the foundation for all which we have sought humbly, yet most heartfully, to bring before them. To find in that ceaseless fountain of living waters, not alone their privileges as women of Israel, but all of strength, comfort, peace, immortal hope, and earthly guidance, which as weak, frail women, they so imperatively need. Will they not then come there, and beholding not only their responsibilities and their duties, but, in the prophets, their sins in the Past and their destiny in the Future, do all they can to break from the one and forward the other? To cultivate with heart, soul, and might, all those spiritual, mental, and accomplished graces which should be every woman's, and yet more strikingly every woman's who calls herself of Israel?

In very many lands of their captivity, it is fully in their power so to do, even if it were possible, yet more so than men; for the ordinances and commands of our holy faith interfere much less with woman's retired path of domestic pursuits and pleasures, than with the more public and more ambitious career of man. Her duty is to make home happy; her mission, to *influence* man, alike in the relative duties of mother to her son, wife to her husband, sister to her brother, and, in her own person, to upraise the holy cause of a religion, which, from its pure spirituality and long concealment, is by the multitude misunderstood, vilified, and charged with such false accusations that only *acts* can remove. Something more is needed for the elevation of our faith, than even making it known through books (though that may accomplish much). We must prove the superiority of our guiding law, by the superiority of our own conduct, as women of Israel, in our own houses.

To obtain this superiority is to become more SPIRITUAL; for in that single word every feminine grace and Jewish requisite is comprised. Let a woman truly and sincerely love her God—feel that his image is in her heart—that she can bring Him so close to her that her every thought, her every aspiration, her every joy, as well as every prayer and sorrow, can be traced up

to Him, and we need not fear that she will ever fail in her duties, either to Him or to man, in his service or in her home. Once this spiritual love obtained, and a halo is thrown over her whole life, be it one of sorrow or of joy. His Law becomes part of her very being; she could not disobey it, without disobeying the gracious Father and Lord whom she loves better than herself. She will love all mankind, think evil of none (without mighty cause), for they are His children, created in His image. She will love the ties of home, her parents, husband, children, brother, and sisters, with intensest and most endearing love—for He has granted them, and filled her glowing heart with the sweet emotions which to *love in Him* creates. She will regard death for herself as yet more happy than life, for then she will be with her God and her beloved ones for evermore, undisturbed by sin or doubt, or fear or woe; and for those she loves, with human suffering indeed—for such we are permitted and encouraged to feel—but still with the firm conviction that for them all must be joy, for they are with God, and in spirit with her still. She will think less of the Grave on Earth than of the Soul in Heaven. She will feel indeed the blank within her home, but she will realize in her heart of hearts the blessed conviction that if Earth has one less, Heaven has one more, and becomes with each that departs, a dearer, more longed-for home. She will look on the meanest flower, the humblest bird, even as on the loftiest things of nature, with that peculiar feeling which the poet describes in those exquisite lines:

> "Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
> Thanks to its tenderness, its joys and fears,
> To me, the meanest flower which blows, can bring
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears:"*

because she feels them the work of her Father in heaven, created as much for her individual joy and thanksgiving, as for the multitudes, who in the Past and the Present and Future have gazed, and will still gaze upon the same.

This is to be spiritual; this is to be an Israelite; this is to be WOMAN. We are quite aware that many of our English readers will exclaim, "Why this is to be Christian!" and refuse to believe that such emotions can have existence in a Jewish heart.

* Wordsworth.

While our Jewish readers will, in consequence, refuse to seek its attainment, because if it resemble Christianity it cannot be Jewish; both parties choosing to forget that the SPIRIT of their widely different creeds has exactly the same origin, the word of God: whence all of Christianity, save its doctrine of belief, originally came.

Let those who deny spirituality to Israel, and declare that it is only from association with the Christian, and reading Christian books, that we think of spirituality at all—read the morality of the Talmud, even if they can only procure those extracts in the Hebrew Review; and unless resolved to retain their opinion in the very face of conviction, they must acknowledge that from us all their spirituality came, and that if we are reawaking to its sublime call, it is not from association with them, but from peace and freedom permitting us once more to honor the Lord as our God, and giving us those extracts from our venerable teachers which show us in what light they regard the ordinances of the Lord. We will quote one passage, even at the risk of being thought tedious, merely to prove our assertion, that spirituality was the very breath of our religion; and how, in fact, could it be otherwise, when it came direct from the revelation of the Lord?

"Man is to impress his mind, *that whatever he does, is to be with the intention to glorify his Creator.* His rising, his walking, his speech, and all his occupations are to have that aim. When eating, drinking, indulging in affection, his purpose is not to be the mere gratification of his desires. His food is merely to be wholesome and nourishing, far removed from luxury. In love he is to recollect its end and aim. Even when he lies down to sleep, it is to be with the intention to arise cheerful and refreshed for the service of his Creator, and thus, even the act of sleep will be an act of worship to his Creator, for our rabbies say, *Let the aim of all thou undertakest be the glory of the Deity.* And thus Solomon says, *In all thy ways acknowledge Him,* and He shall direct thy paths."* Again, we are commanded to associate with the pious and wise, in order to learn their ways; as it is said in the Law, ye shall attach yourselves to Him, you shall *attach yourself to everything that leads to Him, sanctity and perfection.* And again, after most minute

* Selected from Morality of the Talmud. Hebrew Review, page 29

directions, as to the forgiveness of injuries, and banishment of inward resentment, even to its being sinful for man, when he does a kind action to an injured, to say, 'Take it, I will not do to thee as thou didst to me,' for it is transgressing the command, 'Thou shalt not resent,' it continues, '*a man is entirely to dismiss every feeling of ill-will from his heart and mind, as the law not only extends to the actual deed, but likewise to the inward sentiments, and, therefore, the mind must be pure, so that the actions must flow from a worthy source.*'"*

With such writings *our own*, and ours from centuries long past, do we need the works of Christian divines to make Israel spiritual? Oh, shame! shame on those sons of Israel, who, from pure ignorance, deny spirituality to their beautiful creed, and report that we are not a spiritual people! If we have not been, oppressive slavery is the cause. If we are not now, in those nations where we are FREE, the heart shudders at the sin we are incurring: and, oh! fearful is it if the Women of Israel neglect the opportunities now their own, and refuse to become the pure spiritual beings, which not only their religion but their sex so imperatively demands. We fear that with all our efforts to explain our meaning, we shall still by several not be understood; for spirituality is so exquisite and refined, so subtle an essence, that to describe, or explain, or teach it, is impossible. It can only be infused by the earnest desire to possess it, and by the grace of God. It is so peculiarly woman's attribute, that without it her loveliest charms, her highest intellect, feels imperfect. By man it is unattainable to the same extent—unattainable, in fact, at all, unless infused by the influence of woman—and therefore do we so earnestly beseech our sisters in Israel to invite, cultivate, cherish it, till it so becomes a part of themselves that it pervades their every word, thought, and private deed, the domestic worship of *act* and *love*, and the public service of prayer and praise, and thus it be infused into their sons with the very nourishment they give, the caresses of their infancy, the education of their boyhood. Then, indeed, might man become spiritual, and in all things fitted for the first-born of the Lord.

To explain our meaning as to this spiritual essence, which should be indivisible from the woman of Israel, we will refer our

* Morality of the Talmud. Hebrew Review, pp. 59 and 62.

young readers to some probably favorite authors. Every single line written by Mrs. S. C. Hall, whether it be a story for a little child or a three volume novel, a tale for Chambers's Journal or a sketch of Irish character, is so essentially SPIRITUAL, that without a single syllable unduly introduced of religion, we know it must be the religion of God's word, which is the mainspring of her being. Mrs. Hemans, Mrs. Howitt, Mrs. Southey (Caroline Bowles), Joanna Bailie, are all of the same beautiful class. On the other hand, Miss Edgeworth and Miss Austin, two first-rate female writers, are *moral, not spiritual*, in their works. Among male writers—Howitt, Wilson (whether in prose or verse), James Montgomery, Wordsworth, are spiritual writers; Scott, Campbell, Rogers, and many others, are not, and yet their writings are as moral and pure as their more spiritualized brethren's. We are not alluding to either class of writers as elevating one above the other, but simply to endeavor by such reference to make our own feeling of spirituality more clearly understood.

If, then, spirituality is so essentially the vital breath of the Jewish religion and of woman's loveliest nature, will not every woman of Israel seek and strive and pray to make it her own, now that freedom and peace are hers; and her home, though it be but of the exile, is not exposed to the awful trials of the Past, and of the Present in very many lands? If she looks into the records of her ancestors—if she remembers Leah, Deborah, Naomi, Hannah, Abigail, the Shunammite, Huldah, and Esther —must she not feel that spirituality *was* the natural attribute of the Women of Israel in the PAST? and if she carefully studies the prophets, she will find that such *will be* their attribute in FUTURE; and there she will read, that until it is attained by man as well as woman, Israel must remain exiled and captive, far from Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem's God.

We have heard that censures have been passed upon our work, professing to illustrate the future destiny, as well as past history and present duties of the Hebrew females, as a presumptuous allusion to what we can know nothing about. Now, with all due deference to such critiques, we would say, that unless we disbelieve the prophets, our Future Destiny is quite as clearly traced out as her own past history. To quote all the eloquent passages, prophesying not only our restoration to Jerusalem, but the circumcision of the heart, and awakening of that spiritual

religion which will unite us, even on earth, with God, would be useless here. We can only refer our readers to the prophets themselves, and as briefly as may be, condense and indite what appears to us to be their meaning.

When restored to Jerusalem sin will be purified from the human heart; all of stagnation, of hardness, of unbelief, will have vanished; we shall not have to struggle with those imperfections and failings which come between the heart and its God, and deaden all spiritual worship. We shall all know Him then, from the smallest to the greatest of us; there will be no occasion to say to one another, "know ye the Lord." Our burnt-offerings and sacrifices will be again acceptable; the temple of the Lord will be re-established on his holy mountain; and not only will it be sought by the remnant of Israel, gathered from the North and from the South, and from the East and from the West, but *strangers* will join themselves to Israel, and *all nations* will flow unto it, and never more walk in the imagination of their own hearts. The Ten Tribes will be discovered, and Israel and Judah once again made one. Disease and suffering will pass away; even death itself be swallowed up for ever. Our nobles shall be of ourselves, our governors spring from the midst of us, and the Lord himself God over all the families *of Israel*. Pastors and shepherds will be granted us according to the spirit of the Lord, and they will fill us with knowledge and understanding. Not only will the law and its everlasting ordinances be restored; but it will so be written in our hearts, that we shall never more disobey or fail in its spiritual observance. There will be no more vain yearnings in the soul, seeking to spring from its earthly prison to obtain more earnest communion with its God; for every soul will be satisfied with His goodness; the heavy and the sorrowful will be so filled with His love, that weariness and sorrow will alike flee away, and be but names belonging to the Past. And this spiritual restoration will not be distinct from a return to Jewish ordinances and Jewish ceremonies, as our opponents believe. I know not how any reasoning and believing mind, be his creed what it may, can peruse the prophet Ezekiel, from the fortieth chapter to the end, without being almost startled at its close resemblance to the Hebrew religion ordained by God through His servant Moses. More extended, indeed, alike in the size of the Temple and the Holy Land, as *must be*, for the reception

of the multitude, not only of Israel, but of the nations who will universally flow thither, till the earth overflows with righteousness. But however extended, we must perceive that the prophet divides the land once more into the inheritance of the *twelve* tribes; that the gates of the Holy City all bear the names of Jacob's sons. The heritage of the sons of Levi is again to have the service of the Lord. The altars, and courts, and fountains, are all prepared for the restoration of the holy sacrifices and offerings, which, in our captivity, God ordained to cease; nay, the very number and species of animals for the offerings are named, the feasts and fasts referred to; and how, then, can our opponents attempt to persuade us that the sacrifices, and offerings, and festivals, are all but types of another dispensation, and done away with now for ever? What, then, is the meaning of this sublime prophecy, if the religion of the Lord revealed by Moses, *ceremonial* as well as spiritual and moral, is never to be restored? The merit of sacrifices and offerings consisted, not in themselves, but in OBEDIENCE, and that obedience, in our restoration, will again be tried, and never more found to fail, for God himself has promised to remove the stony heart from our breasts, and replace it with the heart of flesh, on which love for Him and His ordinances will be impressed for everlasting.

Faint and feeble is this attempt to portray the destiny awaiting Israel in his own bright land, and earnestly, entreatingly, we beseech our readers to turn to the prophecies themselves, and tracing it there, remember that every consoling promise, every spiritual joy, every forgiveness of sin is promised to *all Israel*, woman as well as man. Who that believes in the prophecies can continue to say that the future destiny of the Hebrew females is a subject unknown, and that therefore it is presumptuous to allude to it? To be restored to our own land, and to the religion of God as Moses taught it, undimmed, untarnished by a single breath of man—to love the Lord indeed, with heart, and soul, and might, and our neighbor as ourselves—to feel no shade, no doubt creep over our minds, and deaden all of spiritual joy—no human imperfections steal between loving hearts, and bid discord reign where God ordained all peace—to feel no weariness, no sadness, but every yearning filled—to be exposed no more to war, be it of sword or word—to become sisters, wives, mothers, of men who, as the first-born of the Lord,

in whatever social rank they occupy, be it prince or peasant, noble or servant, priest or herdsman, will yet, in the sight of all the nation, uphold and show forth the glory, and the majesty, and the mercy of the Lord. This is our future destiny—this the goal to which, as women of Israel, we must press forward, heart and soul: for no little towards its eventual attainment depends on *us*, weak, frail, insignificant in seeming as we are.

It is, we believe, the supposition of some that, as God has ordained these things, nothing depends on man; we have only to wait His time. A long and careful study of his word will, however, convince that merely to *wait* is not enough: our own exertions, our own ceaseless prayers, must hasten the day of our restoration, or still it will be postponed. We must return to the Lord in our captivity, or how will He hear us? "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they have trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary to me; and that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies: *if then* their uncircumcised heart be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity, *then* will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac; and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will also remember their land."* And that covenant was, that as the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea-shore so should be his seed, and in that seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, whilst before the Lord it was a nation for everlasting, and he would be their god. And again, still more forcibly—"And it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse which I have set before thee, *and thou shalt call them to mind amongst all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee*, and *shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul*, THAT THEN the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion on thee, and will return and gather thee *from all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee; and the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul*, THAT THOU MAYST LIVE."†

* Levit. xxvi. 40-42. † Deut. xxx. 1-6.

With these eloquent words of Moses before us, confirmed as they are throughout every prophet, can we doubt a single moment that the Eternal waits to return unto us till we return unto him, to release us from captivity, till we acknowledge its justice by deploring, confessing, and conquering our sins? We must know and feel it relates to us *now*, and not to our first captivity; for then Babylon alone was the scene of our exile, and now it is *over all* the nations that we are scattered. And what is the first gracious promise proffered to win us to return? "That our stony hearts shall be circumcised, that we may *love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul*, so that we may *live*, not only on earth, but *in heaven*;" for such is the true meaning of Moses's words; and will not this prove to us that to *love* God stands first of every duty, and hallows every form which, without such love, is mere mockery to Him, and lifelessness to us? And to love God thus is to attain that spirituality which we so earnestly conjure every woman of Israel to seek; for unless she attains it there is little hope for man, and without it, oh! when will Israel be restored—when will our captivity be at an end! We appeal not to our sisters in Israel merely *as women*, though that is in itself sufficient need for the comfort, the blessedness, of a spiritual worship, but as under God, the influencers of *man*. Compare the boy whose tender years have been passed with a spiritual, a gentle mother, to him who from his earliest infancy has been thrown on the rude influences of man's guidance in a public school: follow these boys to manhood, and there will be little doubt who will most maintain the spiritual, as well as the ceremonial worship of his fathers, or tend most to uphold the glory of his God. Oh! as we would hasten our glorious destiny, let us ponder well our own responsibilities, and becoming more spiritual ourselves, infuse the same immortal essence into man! If we do this, shall we say we have done nothing? shall we not uphold the dignity, the beauty, the holiness of our privileges as women of Israel if we so infuse, so guide, as mothers, that man, uplifted from his grosser self, so unites the spiritual with the worldly, the love of God with the dreams of earth, that without neglecting or despising a single earthly duty or human feeling, he forwards the glorious cause of God, and in the sight of the whole Gentile world stands forth an Israelite indeed? And not as mothers only may we do this; let but the woman of Israel cast aside the frivolous occupations, the petty failings, the love

of mere pleasure which are sometimes the characteristics of her sex, and remembering she is a woman of Israel, a daughter of the Lord, cultivate and love the higher and nobler attributes of heart and spirit; let her prove by the whole aspect of her life, be she young or old, married or single, the cherished member of a family or lonely upon earth, yet let her prove that she is spiritual, alike in the cloudless happiness, the elastic enjoyments of the young girl, and in the quieter pleasures of the matron, the peaceful calm of the more aged; that there is a deeper source than meets the eye; that all man sees and feels so lovable is formed from that close communion with her God called spirituality; and without one serious word, without one reference to the subject blended with her being, yet will woman influence man, and, raising her in his estimation, bid him reverence whilst he loves, and so gradually become infused with the same loftiness of thought and holiness of deed inseparable from spiritualized woman. His superior reason, his mightier power, his cooler and more penetrating judgment will dictate the just medium how to make these noble qualities, imbibed from woman, most useful to his fellows, most serviceable in the cause of God; but not the less will he love and value that weaker sex from whom they are derived.

To the women of Israel, then, is intrusted the noble privilege of hastening "the great and glorious day of the Lord," by the instruction they bestow upon their sons, and the spiritual elevation to which they may attain in social intercourse, and yet more in domestic life. Oh! that we might hope that we have not entirely worked in vain! but that becoming, through these lowly pages, more sensible of their privileges as Women of Israel—feeling that for them, and them alone, the Most High God deigned Himself to provide a law and take them in their weakness, their liability to suffering and oppression, under his own especial care—that instead of degrading and enslaving, the Mosaic religion, as Moses taught, and as the elders commented upon, and the people practised, cared for woman as none other did, or others, too, would have produced their prophetesses: that to them is intrusted the regeneration of Israel; from their instructions, their influence, there must arise men spiritualized and gifted for the service of Israel and his God—women, fit helpmates for such men—that on them, in their homes and in their world, depends the manifestation of that spiritual, mental,

and lofty superiority which their whole history marks their own—that *they* must prove the falsity of those charges hinted by the ignorant against their religion and themselves; that, feeling to their heart's core these things, they would break from the long years of slavery and woe, unshackle the spirit from the heavy chains of indifference which a cessation from oppression originally wove—burst from the prejudices of darkened years, and stand forth in the face of their nation and the whole world, the ministering spirits of love, and thoughtfulness, and worth, companions of man's intellect and need; yet seeking not, dreaming not to vie with him; beautifiers of home, spiritualizers of earth, even as at their creation, and in the revelation of His law, the God of Israel ordained! And if we can attain to this, shall we fail? Oh! let us press forward in this glorious path! let us on, heeding not disappointment, difficulty, or depression. Man cannot deny us our privileges, cannot banish us from the heritage of the children of the Lord—for from everlasting will Israel endure. "Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar—the Lord of Hosts is His name. If these ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, *then* the seed of Israel shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the Lord, If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will cast off the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord." And if we are daughters and sisters, wives and mothers, of a people so beloved, oh! what does not devolve on us to forward and proclaim the glory, and the mercy, and the wisdom, and the love of Israel's Almighty God!

THE END.

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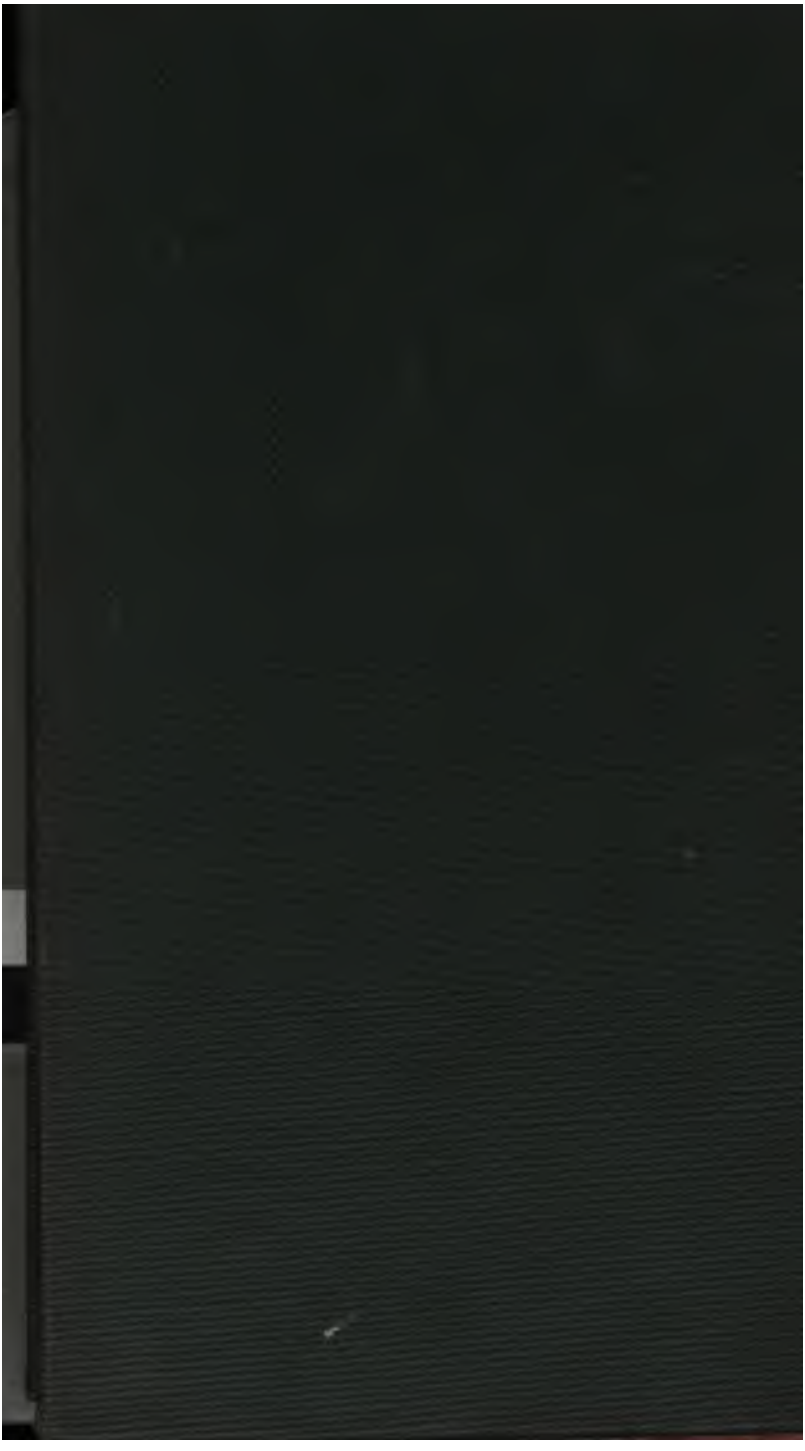
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